00110720

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016

PAROCHIAL AND PLAIN SERMONS

VOLUME III.

RIVINGTONS

London . . . . . *Waterloo Place*
Oxford . . . . . *High Street*
Cambridge . . . . . *Trinity Street*

PAROCHIAL AND PLAIN SERMONS

110720

By JOHN HENRY NEWMAN, B.D.

FORMERLY VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, OXFORD

IN EIGHT VOLUMES

VOL. III.

NEW EDITION

RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1868

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

ABRAHAM AND LOT.

Gen. xiii. 10, 11.

PAGE

"*Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan*" 1

SERMON II.

WILFULNESS OF ISRAEL IN REJECTING SAMUEL.

Psalm xlvi. 10.

"*Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth*" 16

SERMON III.

SAUL.

Hosea xiii. 11.

"*I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath*" 29

SERMON IV.

EARLY YEARS OF DAVID.

1 Samuel xvi. 18.

PAGE

"*Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him*" 44

SERMON V.

JEROBOAM.

1 Kings xiii. 2.

"*He cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee*" 60

SERMON VI.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

Matt. xix. 17.

"*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*" 77

SERMON VII.

CHRISTIAN REPENTANCE.

Luke xv. 18, 19.

"*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants*" 90

SERMON VIII.

CONTRACTED VIEWS IN RELIGION.

Luke xv. 29.

PAGE

"*Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends*" 102

SERMON IX.

A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

Gen. xvi. 13.

"*Thou God seest me*" 114

SERMON X.

TEARS OF CHRIST AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

John xi. 34–36.

"*Jesus said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him!*" 128

SERMON XI.

BODILY SUFFERING.

Col. i. 24.

"*I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church*" . . . 139

SERMON XII.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE ETERNAL SON.

Hebrews v. 7, 8.

PAGE

" Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered" 156

SERMON XIII.

JEWISH ZEAL, A PATTERN TO CHRISTIANS.

Judges v. 31.

" So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years" 173

SERMON XIV.

SUBMISSION TO CHURCH AUTHORITY.

Prov. iv. 24–27.

" Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil" 190

SERMON XV.

CONTEST BETWEEN TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN THE CHURCH.

Matt. xiii. 47, 48.

PAGE

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away" 206

SERMON XVI.

THE CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.

2 Tim. ii. 20.

"In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" 220

SERMON XVII.

THE VISIBLE CHURCH AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH.

Heb. xii. 1.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" 236

SERMON XVIII.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

2 Cor. iii. 18.

PAGE

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" 254

SERMON XIX.

REGENERATING BAPTISM.

1 Cor. xii. 13.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body" . . . 271

SERMON XX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

Matt. xviii. 5.

"Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me" 287

SERMON XXI.

THE DAILY SERVICE.

Heb. x. 25.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching" 301

SERMON XXII.

THE GOOD PART OF MARY.

Luke x. 41, 42.

PAGE

"*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her*" 318

SERMON XXIII.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP A REMEDY FOR EXCITEMENTS.

James v. 13.

"*Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms*" 336

SERMON XXIV.

INTERCESSION.

Ephes. vi. 18.

"*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*" 350

SERMON XXV.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

Rev. vi. 11.

"*And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled*" 367

SERMON I.

ABRAHAM AND LOT.

GEN. xiii. 10, 11.

"*Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan.*"

THE lesson to be gained from the history of Abraham and Lot is obviously this—that nothing but a clear apprehension of things unseen, a simple trust in God's promises, and the greatness of mind thence arising, can make us act above the world—indifferent, or almost so, to its comforts, enjoyments, and friendships; or in other words, that its goods corrupt the common run even of religious men who possess them. Lot, as well as Abraham, left his own country "by faith," in obedience to God's command; yet on a further trial, in which the will of God was not so clearly signified, the one was found "without spot and blameless," the other "was saved so as by fire." Abraham became the "father of all them that believe;" Lot obscured the especial hope of his calling—impaired the privileges of his election—for a time allowed himself to resemble the multitude

of men, as now seen in a Christian country, who are religious to a certain point, and inconsistent in their lives, not aiming at perfection.

His history may be divided into three parts:—first, from the time of his setting out with Abraham from Haran, to their separation; then, from his settlement in the cities of the plain (as they are called), of which Sodom was one, till his captivity and rescue; and lastly, from his return to Sodom, to his escape thence to the mountain, under the Angel's guidance, when the Scripture history loses sight of him. Let us review these in order:—

1. When Abraham and Lot first came into the land of Canaan, they had received, as it seems, no Divine direction where they were to settle. They first came to Sichem; thence they went on to the neighbourhood of Bethel; at length a famine drove them down to Egypt; and after this the history of their temptation (for so it must be called) begins.

Abraham and Lot had given up this world at the word of God; but a more difficult trial remained. Though never easy, yet it is easier to set our hearts on religion, when we have nothing else to engage them —or to take some one decided step, which throws us out of our line of life, and in a manner forces upon us what we should naturally shrink from; than to possess in good measure the goods of this world, and yet love God supremely. Many a man might make a sacrifice of his worldly interests from impulse; and then having little to unsettle him, he is enabled to hold fast his religion, and serve God consistently and accept-

ably. Of course men who make such sacrifices, often evidence much strength of character in making them, which doubtless was Lot's case when he left his country. But it is even a greater thing, it requires a clearer, steadier, nobler faith, to be surrounded with worldly goods, yet to be self-denying; to consider ourselves but stewards of God's bounty, and to be "faithful in all things" committed to us. In this, then, lay the next temptation which befell the two patriarchs. God gave them riches and importance. When they went down to Egypt, Abraham was honourably received by the king of the country. Soon after, it is said that Abraham had "sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels:" again, that "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold;" and presently, that "Lot also . . . . . had flocks, and herds, and tents."[1] The consequence was, that, on their return to Canaan, their households and cattle had become too numerous for one place: "The land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together; for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together."[2] Their servants quarrelled in consequence; each party, for instance, endeavouring to secure the richest pastures, and the best supplied wells. This discordance in the chosen family was, of course, very unseemly, as witnessed by idolaters, the Canaanites and Perizzites, who lived in the neighbourhood. Abraham accordingly proposed a friendly separation, and left it to Lot to choose what part of the country he would settle in.

[1] Gen. xii. 16; xiii. 2, 5. [2] Gen. xiii. 6.

Here was the trial of Lot's faith; let us see how he met it. It so happened, that the most fruitful region, the plain of Jordan, was in the hands of an abandoned people, the inhabitants of Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities. Now, the wealth which Lot had hitherto enjoyed had been given him as a pledge of God's favour, and had its chief value as coming from Him. But surely he forgot this, and esteemed it for its own sake, when he allowed himself to be attracted by the richness and beauty of a guilty and devoted country. The prosperity of a wicked people could not be accounted a mark of God's love; but to look toward Sodom was to go the way of the world, and to make wealth the measure of all things, and the end of life. In the words of the text, "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere . . . . even as the garden of Eden. . . . . And Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan . . . . . and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." I do not see how we can deny that this was a false step in the holy patriarch, blamable in itself, and leading to most serious consequences. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God," says the Psalmist, "than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."[1] But those who have accustomed their minds to look on worldly prosperity as highly desirable in itself, take it wherever they meet with it; now as given by God, and now, again, when not given by Him. It is not to them a point of first importance

[1] Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

by whom it is given, at least not in their secret hearts: though they might, perhaps, be surprised did any one so tell them. If all this does not in its fulness apply to Lot, his history at least reminds us of what takes place daily in instances which resemble it externally. Men still consider themselves, and promise themselves to be, consistent worshippers of the One True God, while they are falling into that sin which the Apostle calls "idolatry,"—the love and worship of the creature for the Creator.

In the meantime Abraham is left without any earthly portion, but with God's presence for his inheritance: and so God witnessed it: for, as if to reward him for his disinterestedness, He renewed to him the promise already made him, of the future grant of the whole land, including even that fair portion of which Lot had temporary possession. "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee."[1]

2. Thus ends the first portion of the history of Abraham and Lot:—To proceed. God is so merciful that He suffers not His favoured servants to wander from Him without repeated warnings. They cannot be

[1] Gen. xiii. 14–17.

"as the heathen:" they are pursued with gracious visitings, as Jonah when he fled away. Lot had chosen the habitation of sinners; still he was not left to himself. A calamity was sent to warn and chasten him;—we are not told indeed that this was the intention of it, but we know even by the light of nature that all affliction is calculated to try and improve us, and so it is fair to say that this was the design of the violence and captivity to which Lot was soon exposed. Sodom, Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, which were subject to Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, at this time revolted from him. In consequence, their country was overrun by his forces and those of his allies; and, a battle taking place, the kings of those cities were defeated and killed, and "their goods and victuals" taken. Lot also and his property fell into their hands. Thus, independently of religious considerations, his place of abode had its disadvantage in that very fertility and opulence which he had coveted, and which attracted the notice of those whose power enabled them to be rapacious. Abraham at this time dwelt in the plain of Mamre, and on hearing the news of his kinsman's capture, he at once assembled his own followers, to the number of above three hundred men, and being joined by several princes of the country, with whom he was confederate, he pursued the plunderers, surprised them by night, routed them, and rescued Lot with his fellow-captives and all his goods.

This, I have said, was a gracious warning to Lot; not a warning only, it seems also to have been an opportunity of breaking off his connection with the people of

Sodom, and removing from the sinful country. However, he did not take it as such. Nothing, indeed, is said of his return thither in this passage of the history; but in the narrative which follows shortly after, we find him still in Sodom, though not involved in the Divine vengeance inflicted upon it;—but of this more presently.

Let us first turn, by way of contrast, to Abraham. How many excuses might he have made to himself, had he so willed, for neglecting his kinsman in misfortune! Especially might he have enlarged on the danger and apparent hopelessness of the attempt to rescue him. But it is a principal characteristic of faith to be careful for others more than for self. With a small band of followers he boldly pursued the forces of the victorious kings, and succeeded in recovering his brother's son. Observe, too, his disinterested and princely spirit after the battle, in refusing part of the spoil. "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet," he said to the king of Sodom, "and I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." Besides, this might be especially necessary to mark his abhorrence of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, and was a sort of protest against their sins. His conduct suggests a further remark:—He had been promised the land in which he now lived as a stranger;—he had valiant troops, though few in number, who, doubtless, had he so desired, might have conquered for him a sufficient portion of it. But he did not attempt it: for he knew God could bring about His design and accomplish His promise in His own good time, without

his use of unlawful means. Force of arms, indeed, would not have been unlawful, had God ordered their use, as afterwards when the Israelites returned from Egypt; but it was unlawful without express command, and Abraham perhaps had to overcome a temptation in not having recourse to it. We have, in the after-history, a similar instance of forbearance in the conduct of David towards Saul. David was promised the kingdom by God Himself; Saul's life was more than once in his hands, but he thought not of the sin of doing him any harm. God could bring about His promise without his "doing evil that good might come." This is the true spirit of faith: to wait upon God, to watch for and to follow His guidance, not to attempt to go before Him.

But did Abraham return to his place without reward for his generous and self-denying conduct? Far otherwise; God mercifully renewed to him the pledge of His favour in answer to this new instance of his faith. As He had renewed the blessing when Lot at first chose the fruitful land, so He blessed him now by the mouth of a great priest and king. Lot went back to Sodom in silence;—but God spoke to Abraham by Melchizedek. "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most High God; and he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth" (who can give away kingdoms and countries as He will), "and blessed be the most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." Who Melchizedek was, is not told us: Scripture speaks of

him as a type of Christ; but we cannot tell how far Abraham knew this, or what particular sanctity attached to his character, or what virtue to his blessing. But evidently it was a special mark of favour placed on Abraham; and the bread and wine, brought forth as refreshment after the fight, had perhaps something of the nature of a sacrament, and conveyed the pledge of mercy.

3. Now let us pass to the concluding event of Lot's history. The gain of this world is but transitory; faith reaps a late but lasting recompense. Soon the Angels of God descended to fulfil in one and the same mission a double purpose;—to take from Lot his earthly portion, and to prepare for the accomplishment of the everlasting blessings promised to Abraham; to destroy Sodom, while they foretold the approaching birth of Isaac.

The destruction of the guilty cities was at hand. "The Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me, and if not, I will know."[1] And now the greatest honour was put upon Abraham. God entrusted him with the knowledge of His secret purpose, and, in so doing, made him a second time the deliverer of Lot from ruin; strongly marking the contrast between the two, in that the weak brother owed his safety to the intercession of him, who, enjoying God's favour, was content to be without earthly portion. "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that

[1] Gen. xviii. 20, 21.

thing which I do? seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of Him." Accordingly, Abraham was allowed to intercede for Sodom, and all who were in it. I need scarcely go through this solemn narrative, which is doubtless well known to all of us. Abraham began with asking whether fifty righteous were not remaining in the city; he found himself obliged gradually to contract the supposed remnant of good men therein, till he came down to ten, but not even ten were found to delay God's vengeance. Here he ceased his intercession, perhaps in despair, and fearing to presume upon that adorable mercy, the depths of which he had tried, but had not ascertained. He did not mention Lot by name; still God understood and answered the unexpressed desire of his heart; for we are told presently, "It came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God *remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt."[1]

It was at eventide that two Angels came to Sodom, to rescue from it the only man (as it would seem) who had retained in his mind those instincts of right and wrong which are given us by nature, who continued to

[1] Gen. xix. 29.

acknowledge the true God, had exercised himself in faith and obedience, and had not done despite to the gracious Spirit. Multitudes of children there doubtless were in that city untainted with actual sin; these were involved in their parents' ruin, as they are now-a-days in earthquakes, conflagrations, or shipwreck. But of those who could "discern between their right hand and their left," not ten (we know for certain), and (as it may be concluded) not one had righteousness such as Lot's. "Old and young, all the people," "in every quarter," were corrupt before God, and therefore are "set forth for an example" of what the All-merciful God can do when sinners provoke Him to wrath. "We will destroy this place," the Angels said, "because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." "And when the morning arose the Angels hastened Lot . . . and brought him forth and set him without the city: and said, Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Thus was Lot a second time warned and rescued; whether he was brought thereby to a more consistent righteousness, or more enlightened faith, than before, we know not. What became of him after this event, we know not; of his subsequent life and death nothing is told us, the sacred record breaks off abruptly. This alone we know, that his posterity, the Moabites and Ammonites, were the enemies of the descendants of Abraham, his friend and kinsman, the favoured servant of God; especially as seducing them to that idolatry and sensuality which

the chosen family was set apart to withstand. Had not God in mercy confirmed to us, by the mouth of St. Peter, the saying of the wise man in the Apocrypha, that Lot was "righteous," we should have had cause to doubt whether he had not fallen away.

However, without forming harsh judgments concerning one whom Scripture thus honours, we may at least draw from his history a useful lesson for ourselves. Miserable will be the fate of the doubleminded, of those who love this world so well that they will not give it up, though they believe and acknowledge that God bids them do so. Not that they confess to themselves that their hearts are set upon it; they contrive to hide the fact from themselves by specious excuses, and consider themselves religious men. My brethren, do not take it for granted that your temper of mind is much superior to that which I have been describing and condemning; nay, that it is not worse than it. You, indeed, are placed in an age of the world which is conspicuous for decency, and in which there are no temptations to the more hideous forms of sin, or rather much to deter from them. But answer this one question, and then decide whether this age does not follow Lot's pattern. It would appear that he thought more of the riches than of the sins of the cities of the plain. Now, as to the temper of this country, consider fairly, is there any place, any persons, any work, which our countrymen will not connect themselves with, in the way of trade or business? For the sake of gain, do we not put aside all considerations of principle as unseasonable and almost absurd? It is not possible to

explain myself on this subject without entering into details too familiar for this sacred place; but try to follow out for yourselves what I suggest in general terms. Is there any speculation in commerce which religion is allowed to interfere with? Whether Jew, Pagan, or Heretic, is to be our associate, does it frighten us ever so little? Do we care what side of a quarrel, civil, political, or international, we take, so that we gain by it? Do we not serve in war, do we not become debaters and advocates, do we not form associations and parties, with the supreme object of preserving property, or making it? Do we not support religion for the sake of peace and good order? Do we not measure its importance by its efficacy in securing these objects? Do we not support it only so far as it secures them? Do we not retrench all expenses of maintaining it which are not necessary for securing them? Should we not feel very lukewarm towards the established religion, unless we thought the security of property bound up in its welfare? Should we not easily resign ourselves to its overthrow, could it be proved to us that it endangered the State, involved the prospect of civil disturbances, or embarrassed the Government? nay, could we not even consent to that overthrow, at the price of the reunion of all parties in the nation, the pacification of turbulent districts, and the establishment of our public credit? Nay, further still, could we not easily persuade ourselves to support Antichrist, I will not say at home, but at least abroad, rather than we should lose one portion of the freights which "the ships of Tarshish" bring us? If this be the case in

any good measure, how vain is it to shelter ourselves, as the manner of some is, under the notion that we are a moral, thoughtful, sober-minded, or religious people! Lot is called a "just man" by St. Peter, he is referred to as "hospitable" by St. Paul;[1] doubtless he was a confessor of the truth among the wretched inhabitants of the cities in which he dwelt; and the rays of light which those Apostles shed upon his history, are most cheering and acceptable, after reading the sad narrative of the Book of Genesis; still, after all, who would willingly take on himself Lot's sins, plain though it be that God had not deserted him? Surely, if we are to be saved, it is not by keeping ourselves just above the line of reprobation, and living without any anxiety and struggle to serve God with a perfect heart. Surely, if Christians are to be saved, at least their righteousness must be far other than that which merely argued some remaining grace in one who was not a Christian. Surely, if Christians are to be saved, they must have carefully unlearned the love of this world's pleasures, comforts, luxuries, honours. No one, surely, can really be a Christian, who makes his worldly interests his chief end of action. A man may be, in a measure, ill-tempered, resentful, proud, cruel, or sensual, and yet be a Christian. For passions belong to our inferior nature; they are irrational, rise spontaneously, are to be subdued by our governing principle, and (through God's grace) are ultimately, though gradually, subdued. But what shall be said when the reasoning and ruling faculty, the power that wills and controls, is turned earthward?

[1] 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8; Heb. xiii. 2.

"If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"[1]

God only knows how far these remarks concern each of us. I will not dare to apply them to this man or that; but where I even might, I will rather turn away my mind from the subject. The thought is too serious, too dreadful to dwell upon. But you must do, my brethren, what I must not do. It is your duty to apply them to yourselves. Do not hesitate, as many of you as have never done so, to imagine the miserable and shocking possibility of your coming short of your hope, "having loved this present world." Retire into yourselves and imagine it; in the presence of Christ your Saviour—in that presence which at once will shame you, and will encourage you to hope for forgiveness, if you earnestly turn to Him to obtain it.

[1] Matt. vi. 23.

SERMON II.

WILFULNESS OF ISRAEL IN REJECTING SAMUEL.

PSALM xlvi. 10.

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

IT was a lesson continually set before the Israelites, that they were never to presume to act of themselves, but to wait till God wrought for them, to look on reverently, and then follow His guidance. God was their All-wise King: it was their duty to have no will of their own, distinct from His will, to form no plan of their own, to attempt no work of their own. "*Be still*, and know that I am God." Move not, speak not—look to the pillar of the cloud, see how *it* moves—then follow. Such was the command.

For instance—when the Egyptians pursued the Israelites to the coast of the Red Sea, Moses said to the people, "Fear ye not, *stand still*, and see the salvation of the Lord; the Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." When they came to the borders of Canaan, and were frightened at the strength of its inhabitants, they were exhorted, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God shall fight for

you." To the same effect was the dying injunction of Joshua, "Be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." And in a later age, when the Moabites and Ammonites made war against Jehoshaphat, the prophet Jahaziel was inspired to encourage the people in these words:—"Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, *stand ye still*, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem." Once more—When Israel and Syria came against Judah, the prophet Isaiah was directed to meet Ahaz, and to say to him, "Take heed, and *be quiet;* fear not, neither be faint-hearted."[1] Presumption—that is, the determination to act of themselves, or self-will—was placed in the number of the most heinous sins. "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die, and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel."[2]

While, however, this entire surrender of themselves to their Almighty Creator was an especial duty enjoined on the chosen people, a deliberate and obstinate transgression of that duty is one of the especial characteristics of their history. They failed most conspicuously in that very point in which obedience was most strictly enjoined them. They were told never to act of them-

[1] Ex. xiv. 13, 14; Deut. i. 29, 30; Josh. xxiii. 6; 2 Chron. xx. 15, 17; Isa. vii. 4.

[2] Deut. xvii. 12.

selves, and (as if out of mere perverseness) they were for ever acting of themselves; and, if we look through the series of their punishments, we shall find them inflicted, not for mere indolent disobedience, or for frailty under temptation, but for deliberate, shameless presumption, running forward just in that very direction in which the providence of God did *not* lead them, and from which it even prohibited them.

First, they made a molten image to worship, and this just after receiving the command to make to themselves no emblems of the Divine Majesty, and while Moses was still in the Mount. Then they would take to themselves a captain, and return to Egypt, instead of proceeding into the land of promise. When forbidden to go forward, then they at once attempted to do so. At last, when they had entered it, instead of following God's guidance, and destroying the guilty inhabitants, they adopted a plan of their own, and put their conquered enemies under tribute. Next followed their self-willed purpose of having a king like the nations around them.

It is observable, moreover, that they were the most perversely disobedient at those times when Divine mercy had aided them in some remarkable way. For instance, in the lifetime of Moses. Again, when Samuel was raised up to bring back the age of Moses, and to complete what he had begun, then they ran counter to God's design most signally; at the very time, I say, when God was visiting them in their low estate, and renewing His mercies, their very first act, on gaining a little strength, and recovering from their despair,

was to reject God's government over them, and ask a king like other nations.

This is the part of their history to which I wish now particularly to draw your attention, the times of Samuel; the main circumstances to be considered being these—the renewal of God's mercies to them after their backslidings; His single demand in return, that they should submit themselves to His guidance; and, lastly, their plain refusal to do so, or rather their impetuous and deliberate movement in another direction.

When Moses was nigh his death, he foretold that a prophet was one day to arise like unto him in his place, a promise which was properly fulfilled in Christ's coming, but which had a prior accomplishment in the line of prophets from Samuel down to the captivity. A period, however, of four hundred years intervened between Moses' age and this first fulfilment of the prediction. The people were at first ruled by judges. At length, in the midst of the distress which their sins had brought upon them, when the Philistines had overrun the country, God visited them according to the promise. He raised up Samuel as His first prophet, and him not as a solitary messenger of His purposes, but as the first of many hundreds in succession.

Now, let us consider the circumstances under which Samuel, the first of the prophets, was raised up. We shall find that his elevation was owing simply to God's will and power. He, like Moses, was not a warrior, yet by his prayers he saved his people from their enemies, and established them in a settled government. "Be still, and know that I am God." The principle of

this command had been illustrated in the giving of the Law, and now it was enforced in the beginning of the Prophetical Dispensation, as also in later ages, after the captivity, and when Christ came, according to the words of Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."[1]

Observe, Samuel was born, in answer to his mother's earnest prayer for a son. Hannah, "in bitterness of soul, had prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, and vowed a vow," viz.—that if God would give her a son, he should be dedicated to Him. This should be noticed, for Samuel was thus marked from his birth as altogether an instrument of the Lord's providing. A similar providence is observable in the case of other favoured objects and ministers of God's mercy, in order to show that that mercy is entirely of grace. Isaac was the child of Divine power, so was John the Baptist; and Moses, again, was almost miraculously saved from the murderous Egyptians in his infancy.

According to his mother's vow, Samuel was taken into the service of the temple from his earliest years; and, while yet a child, was made the organ of God's sentence of evil upon Eli the high priest. God called him, in the sacred time, between night and morning, "Samuel, Samuel," and pronounced through him a judgment against Eli, for his sinful indulgence towards his sons. Here, again, was a lesson to the Israelites, how entirely the prophetic spirit, with which the nation was henceforth to be favoured, was from God. Had Samuel grown to manhood before he was inspired, it would not

[1] Zech. iv. 6.

have clearly appeared how far the work was immediately Divine; but when an untaught child was made to prophesy against Eli, the aged high priest, the people were reminded, as in the case of Moses, who was slow of speech, that it was the Lord who "made man's mouth, the dumb, or deaf, the seeing, or the blind;"[1] and that age and youth were the same with Him when His purposes required an instrument.

Samuel thus grew up to manhood, with the presages of greatness on him from the first. It is written, "Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba" (*i.e.*, from one end of the land to the other), "knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord."[2]

After this, when he was about thirty years old, the battle took place with the Philistines, in which thirty thousand Israelites fell. The ark of God was taken, and Eli, on hearing the news, fell from off his seat backward, and was killed. Thus Samuel was raised to the supreme power, in his country's greatest affliction. Still even in his elevation, he was not allowed to do any great action himself. The ark of God was taken, yet he was not to rescue it. God so ordered it that His name "should be exalted among the heathen, and should be exalted in the earth."

The Philistines took the ark to Ashdod, and placed

[1] Exod. iv. 11. [2] 1 Sam. iii. 19–21.

it in the temple of their idol, Dagon. Next morning, Dagon was found fallen on its face to the earth before it. They set it up again, and the next morning it was found broken into pieces;[1] and soon after the men of Ashdod and its neighbourhood were smitten with a Divine judgment. In consequence, they resolved to rid themselves of what they rightly considered the cause of it, and transported the ark to Gath. The men of Gath were smitten with God's anger in their turn, and in their turn sent away the ark to Ekron. The Ekronites, in their terror, hardly suffered it to approach them. But the mysterious plague still attended it; and the Ekronites, as they had justly feared, were smitten with a "deadly destruction throughout all the city." The Philistines now determined to send their spoil, as they had at first fancied it, back to Israel; but in order to try further, as it seems, the power of the God of Israel, they did as follows: They took two milch-kine, which had never been under the yoke, and shutting up their calves at home, harnessed them to the cart on which they had placed the ark. Should the kine, in spite of their natural affection for their young, go towards the Israelitish border, then, they argued, they might be sure that it was the God of Israel who had smitten them, in punishment for their capture of His holy habitation. It is written, "The kine took the straight way" towards the territory of Israel, "lowing as they went, and *turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.*"[2]

All this was a lesson to the Philistines; but the Israelites had yet theirs to learn. They had taken the

[1] 1 Sam. v. 3, 4. [2] 1 Sam. vi. 12.

ark to the battle, not in reverence, but as if it were a sort of charm, with virtue in itself, and without any command from God, presumptuously. They were first punished by losing it. When they saw the ark returning to them, they rejoiced; and the Levites took it down and offered sacrifice. So far was well, but presently, "The men of Bethshemesh . . . . looked into it;" this evidenced a want of reverence towards God's sacred dwelling-place. And God "smote of the people fifty thousand threescore and ten men; and the people lamented," and said, "Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God?"

Thus, when Almighty God, four hundred years after the age of Moses, again visited His people, He showed Himself in various ways to be the sole Author of the blessings they received. The child Samuel, the ark of wood, the brute cattle—these were the instruments through which He manifested that He was a living God; and having thus bared His mighty arm, and bid all men "be still, and know that He was God," then at length He sent His first prophet forward to teach and reclaim the people. "Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." The period during which this reformation was carried on seems to have been the greater part of twenty years, which was more or less a

time of captivity. Towards the end of it, he gathered the Israelites together at Mizpeh, to hold a fast for their past sins; and then "he judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh." This seems to imply a more open assumption of power than any he had been hitherto directed to make. In consequence, the Philistines were alarmed, thinking perhaps the subjugated people were on the point of recovering their independence; and, assembling their forces, they marched against them. "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." The Philistines drew near to battle, while the sacrifice was offering; "but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel. . . . . Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." This whole transaction is a fresh illustration of the text. It is added, "So the Philistines were subdued, and came no more into the coast of Israel, and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which they had taken from Israel were restored." "And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life," making circuits year by year through the land.

And now we have arrived at the point in the history, which evidences, more than any other, the perverse

ingratitude of the Israelites. Just when God had rescued them from their enemies, given them peace, and by a fresh act of bounty established the prophets in the land as ministers of His word and will, when the heavenly system was just coming into operation, this was the very time they chose to rebel and run counter to His purposes. They asked for themselves a king like the nations. The immediate occasion of this request was the faulty conduct of Samuel's sons, who assisted their father in his old age, "but walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."[1] This, however, though doubtless a grievance, surely was no excuse for them. While the Lord was their king, no lasting harm could happen to them; yet even "the elders of Israel came to Samuel, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." They added a reason which still more clearly evidenced their obstinate unbelief—"to judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." By what strange infatuation was it that they sought for a king to "*fight their battles*," when, through the whole course of Samuel's government, it was so evident that God's power alone had subdued their enemies? There was one additional aggravation of their sin; they had really been promised a king, at some future time undetermined, by Moses himself;[2] and hence, indeed, they probably defended their asking for one. But, in truth, that very circumstance gave to their self-will its distinctive mark already insisted on,

[1] 1 Sam. viii. 3. [2] Deut. xvii. 14-20.

viz., the desire of doing things in their own way instead of waiting God's time. The fact that God had promised what they clamoured for, and merely claimed to choose the time, surely ought to have satisfied them. But they were headstrong; and He answered them according to their wilfulness. He "gave them a king in His anger." David, indeed, succeeded, but the corruption and degradation of the people quickly followed his death. The kingdom was divided into two; idolatry was introduced; and at length captivity came upon them, the loss of their country, and the dispersion, or rather annihilation of the greater part of the tribes.

In conclusion, I will make one remark by way of applying their history to ourselves at this day. Certainly we have not, at the present time, learned the duty of waiting and being still. Great perils, just now, encompass our branch of the Church; here the question comes upon us, as a body and as individuals, what ought we to do? Doubtless to meet them with all the wisdom and prudence in our power, to use all allowable means to avert them; but, after all, is not our main duty this: to go on quietly and steadfastly in our old ways, as if nothing was the matter? "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed," which condemned him to the lions' den, if he did what was his plain duty, he did not look about to see whether he might not lawfully suspend it for a time, or whether there were not other ways of serving God not interdicted by the civil power, but "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he

did aforetime."[1]. It is a very painful subject, but it is not right to shut our eyes to the fact, that friends of the Church are far more disposed to look out for secular and unauthorized ways of defending her, than to proceed quietly in their ordinary duties, and trust to God to save her. What is the use of these feverish exertions, on all sides of us, to soothe our enemies, conciliate the suspicious or wavering, and attach to us men of name and power? Rather let our resolve be, if we are to perish, it shall be at our post of duty. We will be found in the circle of our sacred services, in prayer and praise, in fasting and alms-doing, "in quietness and confidence." All the great deliverances of the Church have been thus gained. Israel stood still and saw the Egyptians overwhelmed in the sea. Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and prayed to Him who dwelt between the Cherubim, and Sennacherib's army was destroyed. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for" St. Peter, and the Apostle was delivered out of prison by an Angel. The course of Providence is not materially different now. God's arm is not shortened, nay, nor so restrained that He cannot save without miracles as well as with them. He can save silently and suddenly, while things seem to go on as usual. The hearts of all are in His hand, the issues of life and death, the rise and fall of mighty men, and the distribution of gifts. Why, then, should we fear, or cast about for means of defence, who have the Lord for our God? He may indeed, if it so happen, make us His instruments, He may put arms

[1] Dan. vi. 10.

into our hands; but even if He gives us no tokens what He is meditating, what then? At length our deliverance will come, when we expect it not; whereas we shall lose our own hope, and disorder the Church greatly, if we presume to form plans of our own by way of protecting it. Jeroboam thought he acted "wisely" when he set up the calves of gold at Dan and Bethel. Our wisdom is like his, if we venture to relax one jot or tittle of Christ's perfect law, one article of the Creed, one holy ordinance, one ancient usage, with the hope of placing ourselves in a more advantageous or less irksome position. "Our strength is to sit still;" and till we learn this far more than we seem at present to understand it, surely the hopes of the true Israel among us must be low, and with prayers for the Church's safety they will have to mingle confessions and intercessions in behalf of those who believe themselves its prudent friends and effective defenders, and are not.

SERMON III.

SAUL.

HOSEA xiii. 11.

"I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath."

THE Israelites seem to have asked for a king from an unthankful caprice and waywardness. The ill conduct, indeed, of Samuel's sons was the occasion of the sin, but "an evil heart of unbelief," to use Scripture language, was the real cause of it. They had ever been restless and dissatisfied, asking for flesh when they had manna, fretful for water, impatient of the wilderness, bent on returning to Egypt, fearing their enemies, murmuring against Moses. They had miracles even to satiety; and then, for a change, they wished a king like the nations. This was the chief reason of their sinful demand. And further, they were dazzled with the pomp and splendour of the heathen monarchs around them, and they desired some one to fight their battles, some visible succour to depend on, instead of having to wait for an invisible Providence, which came in its own way and time, by little and little, being dispensed silently, or tardily, or (as they might consider) unsuitably. Their carnal hearts did not love the neighbour-

hood of heaven; and, like the inhabitants of Gadara afterwards, they prayed that Almighty God would depart from their coasts.

Such were some of the feelings under which they desired a king like the nations; and God at length granted their request. To punish them, He gave them a king *after their own heart*, Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; of whom the text speaks in these terms, "I gave them a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath."

There is, in true religion, a sameness, an absence of hue and brilliancy, in the eyes of the natural man; a plainness, austereness, and (what he considers) sadness. It is like the heavenly manna of which the Israelites complained, insipid, and at length wearisome, "like wafers made with honey." They complained that "their soul was dried away:" "There is nothing at all," they said, "beside this manna, before our eyes. . . . We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick."[1] Such were the dainty meats in which their soul delighted; and for the same reason they desired a king. Samuel had too much of primitive simplicity about him to please them, they felt they were behind the world, and clamoured to be put on a level with the heathen.

Saul, the king whom God gave them, had much to recommend him to minds thus greedy of the dust of the earth. He was brave, daring, resolute; gifted, too,

[1] Exod. xvi.; Numb. xi. 5.

with strength of body as well as of mind—a circumstance which seems to have attracted their admiration. He is described in person as if one of those sons of Anak, before whose giant-forms the spies of the Israelites in the wilderness were as grasshoppers—"a choice young man, and a goodly; there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people."[1] Both his virtues and his faults were such as became an eastern monarch, and were adapted to secure the fear and submission of his subjects. Pride, haughtiness, obstinacy, reserve, jealousy, caprice—these, in their way, were not unbecoming qualities in the king after whom their imaginations roved. On the other hand, the better parts of his character were of an excellence sufficient to engage the affection of Samuel himself.

As to Samuel, his conduct is far above human praise. Though injuriously treated by his countrymen, who cast him off after he had served them faithfully till he was "old and gray-headed,"[2] and who resolved on setting over themselves a king against his earnest entreaties, still we find no trace of coldness or jealousy in his behaviour towards Saul. On his first meeting with him, he addressed him in the words of loyalty—"On whom is all the desire of Israel? is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?" Afterwards, when he anointed him king, he "kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance?" When he announced him to the people as their king, he said, "See ye him whom the

[1] 1 Sam. ix. 2—vide 1 Sam. x. 23. [2] 1 Sam. xii. 2.

Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?" And, some time after, when Saul had irrecoverably lost God's favour, we are told, "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: *nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul.*" In the next chapter he is even rebuked for immoderate grief—"How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?"[1] Such sorrow speaks favourably for Saul as well as for Samuel; it is not only the grief of a loyal subject and a zealous prophet, but, moreover, of an attached friend; and, indeed, instances are recorded, in the first years of his reign, of forbearance, generosity, and neglect of self, which sufficiently account for the feelings with which Samuel regarded him. David, under very different circumstances, seems to have felt for him a similar affection.

The higher points of his character are brought out in instances such as the following:—The first announcement of his elevation came upon him suddenly, but apparently without unsettling him. He kept it secret, leaving it to Samuel, who had made it to him, to publish it. "Saul said unto his uncle, He" (that is, Samuel) "told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, *he told him not.*" Nay, it would even seem he was averse to the dignity intended for him; for when the Divine lot fell upon him, he hid himself, and was not discovered by the people, without recourse to Divine assistance. The appointment was at first unpopular. "The children

[1] 1 Sam. ix. 20; x. 1, 24; xv. 35; xvi. 1.

of Belial said, How shall this man save us? They despised him, and brought him no presents, *but he held his peace.*" Soon the Ammonites invaded the country beyond Jordan, with the avowed intention of subjugating it. The people sent to Saul for relief almost in despair; and the panic spread in the interior as well as among those whose country was immediately threatened. The history proceeds:—"*Behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field;* and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? and they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and his anger was kindled greatly." His order for an immediate gathering throughout Israel was obeyed with the alacrity with which the multitude serve the strong-minded in times of danger. A decisive victory over the enemy followed; then the popular cry became, "Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. And Saul said, *There shall not a man be put to death this day,* for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel."[1]

Thus personally qualified, Saul was, moreover, a prosperous king. He had been appointed to subdue the enemies of Israel, and success attended his arms. At the end of the fourteenth chapter, we read, "So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines; and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And

[1] 1 Sam. xi. 12, 13.

he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them."

Such was Saul's character and success; his character faulty, yet not without promise; his success in arms as great as his carnal subjects could have desired. Yet, in spite of Samuel's private liking for him, and in spite of the good fortune which actually attended him, we find that from the beginning the prophet's voice is raised both against people and king in warnings and rebukes, which are omens of his destined destruction, according to the text, "I gave them a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath." At the very time that Saul is publicly received as king, Samuel protests, "Ye have this day rejected your God, who Himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations."[1] In a subsequent assembly of the people, in which he testified his uprightness, he says, "Is it not wheat-harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain; that ye *may perceive and see that your wickedness is great,* in asking you a king." Again, "If ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."[2] And after this, on the first instance of disobedience, and at first sight no very heinous sin, the sentence of rejection is passed upon him: "Thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart."[3]

Here, then, a question may be raised—Why was Saul thus marked for vengeance from the beginning? Why these presages of misfortune, which from the first hung

[1] 1 Sam. x. 19. [2] Ibid. xii. 17, 25. [3] Ibid. xiii. 14.

over him, gathered, fell in storm and tempest, and at length overwhelmed him? Is his character so essentially faulty that it must be thus distinguished for reprobation above all the anointed kings after him? Why, while David is called a man after God's own heart, should Saul be put aside as worthless?

This question leads us to a deeper inspection of his character. Now, we know, the first duty of every man is the fear of God—a reverence for His word, a love of Him, and a desire to obey Him; and, besides, it was peculiarly incumbent on the king of Israel, as God's vicegerent, by virtue of his office, to promote His glory whom his subjects had rejected.

Now Saul "lacked this one thing." His character, indeed, is obscure, and we must be cautious while considering it; still, as Scripture is given us for our instruction, it is surely right to make the most of what we find there, and to form our judgment by such lights as we possess. It would appear, then, that Saul was never under the abiding influence of religion, or, in Scripture language, "the fear of God," however he might be at times moved and softened. Some men are inconsistent in their conduct, as Samson; or as Eli, in a different way; and yet may have lived by faith, though a weak faith. Others have sudden falls, as David had. Others are corrupted by prosperity, as Solomon. But as to Saul, there is no proof that he had any deep-seated religious principle at all; rather, it is to be feared, that his history is a lesson to us, that the "heart of unbelief" may exist in the very sight of God, may rule a man in spite of many natural

advantages of character, in the midst of much that is virtuous, amiable, and commendable.

Saul, it would seem, was naturally brave, active, generous, and patient; and what nature made him, such he remained, that is, without improvement; with virtues which had no value, because they required no effort, and implied the influence of no principle. On the other hand, when we look for evidence of his faith, that is, his practical sense of things unseen, we discover instead a deadness to all considerations not connected with the present world. It is his habit to treat prophet and priest with a coldness, to say the least, which seems to argue some great internal defect. It would not be inconsistent with the Scripture account of him, even should the real fact be, that (with some general notions concerning the being and providence of God) he doubted of the divinity of the Dispensation of which he was an instrument. The circumstance which first introduces him to the inspired history is not in his favour. While in search of his father's asses, which were lost, he came to the city where Samuel was; and though Samuel was now an old man, and from childhood known as the especial minister and prophet of the God of Israel, Saul seems to have considered him as a mere diviner, such as might be found among the heathen, who, for "the fourth part of a shekel of silver," would tell him his way.

The narrative goes on to mention, that after his leaving Samuel "God gave him another heart," and on meeting a company of prophets, "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." Upon this, "all that knew him beforetime" said,

"What is this that is come unto the son of Kish: is Saul also among the prophets? . . . . . therefore it became a proverb." From this narrative we gather, that his carelessness and coldness in religious matters were so notorious, that, in the eyes of his acquaintance, there was a certain strangeness and incongruity, which at once struck the mind, in his being associated with a school of the prophets.

Nor have we any reason to believe, from the after history, that the divine gift, then first imparted, left any religious effect upon his mind. At a later period of his life we find him suddenly brought under the same sacred influence on his entering the school where Samuel taught; but, instead of softening him, its effect upon his outward conduct did but testify the fruitlessness of divine grace when acting upon a will obstinately set upon evil.

The immediate occasion of his rejection was his failing under a specific trial of his obedience, as set before him at the very time he was anointed. He had collected with difficulty an army against the Philistines: while waiting for Samuel to offer the sacrifice, his people became dispirited, and began to fall off and return home. Here he was doubtless exposed to the temptation of taking unlawful measures to put a stop to their defection. But when we consider that the act to which he was persuaded was no less than that of his offering sacrifice —he being neither priest nor prophet, nor having any commission thus to interfere with the Mosaic ritual—it is plain "his *forcing himself*" to do so (as he tenderly described his sin) was a direct profaneness—a profane-

ness which implied that he was careless about forms, which in this world will ever be essential to things supernatural, and thought it mattered little whether he acted in God's way or in his own.

After this, he seems to have separated himself from Samuel, whom he found unwilling to become his instrument, and to have had recourse to the priesthood instead. Ahijah or Ahimelech (as he is afterwards called), the high priest, followed his camp; and the ark too, in spite of the warning conveyed by the disasters which attended the presumptuous use of it in the time of Eli. "And Saul said unto Ahijah, Bring hither the ark of God;" while it was brought, a tumult which was heard in the camp of the Philistines, increased. On this interruption Saul irreverently put the ark aside, and went out to the battle.

It will be observed, that there was no professed or intentional irreverence in Saul's conduct; he was still on the whole the same he had ever been. He outwardly respected the Mosaic ritual—about this time he built his first altar to the Lord,[1] and in a certain sense seemed to acknowledge God's authority. But nothing shows he considered that there was any vast distinction between Israel and the nations around them. He was *indifferent*, and cared for none of these things. The chosen people desired a king like the nations, and such a one they received.

After this he was commanded to "go and smite the sinners, the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them and their cattle." This was a judgment on them which

[1] 1 Sam. xiv. 35.

God had long decreed, though He had delayed it; and He now made Saul the minister of His vengeance. But Saul performed it so far only as fell in with his own inclination and purposes. He smote, indeed, the Amalekites, and "destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword"—this exploit had its glory; the best of the flocks and herds he spared, and why? to sacrifice therewith to the Lord. But since God had expressly told him to destroy them, what was this but to imply, that divine intimations had nothing to do with such matters? what was it but to consider that the established religion was but a useful institution, or a splendid pageant suitable to the dignity of monarchy, but resting on no unseen supernatural sanction? Certainly he in no sense acted in the fear of God, with the wish to please Him, and the conviction that he was in His sight. One might consider it mere pride and wilfulness in him, acting in his own way because it was his own (which doubtless it was in great measure), except that he appears to have had an eye to the feelings and opinions of men as to his conduct, though not to God's judgment. He "feared the people and obeyed their voice." Again, he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Doubtless he considered Agag as "his brother," as Ahab afterwards called Ben-hadad. Agag was a king, and Saul observed towards him that courtesy and clemency which earthly monarchs observe one towards another, and rightly, when no divine command comes in the way. But the God of Israel required a king after His own heart, jealous of idolatry; the people had desired a king like the nations around them.

It is remarkable, moreover, that while he spared Agag, he attempted to exterminate the Gibeonites with the sword, who were tolerated in Israel by virtue of an oath taken in their favour by Joshua and "the princes of the congregation." This he did "*in his zeal* to the children of Israel and Judah."[1]

From the time of his disobedience in the matter of Amalek, Samuel came no more to see Saul, whose season of probation was over. The evil spirit exerted a more visible influence upon him; and God sent Samuel to anoint David privately, as the future king of Israel. I need not trace further the course of moral degradation which is exemplified in Saul's subsequent history. Mere natural virtue wears away, when men neglect to deepen it into religious principle. Saul appears in his youth to be unassuming and forbearing; in advanced life he is not only proud and gloomy (as he ever was in a degree), but cruel, resentful, and hard-hearted, which he was not in his youth. His injurious treatment of David is a long history; but his conduct to Ahimelech, the high priest, admits of being mentioned here. Ahimelech assisted David in his escape. Saul resolved on the death of Ahimelech and all his father's house.[2] On his guards refusing to execute his command, Doeg, a man of Edom, one of the nations which Saul was raised up to withstand, undertook the atrocious deed. On that day, eighty-five priests were slain. Afterwards Nob, the city of the priests, was smitten with the edge of the sword, and all destroyed, "men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and

[1] Josh. ix. 2; 2 Sam. xxi. 1-5 [2] 1 Sam. xxii. 16.

asses, and sheep." That is, Saul executed more complete vengeance on the descendants of Levi, the sacred tribe, than on the sinners, the Amalekites, who laid wait for Israel in the way, on their going up from Egypt.

Last of all, he finishes his bad history by an open act of apostasy from the God of Israel. His last act is like his first, but more significant. He began, as we saw, by consulting Samuel as a diviner; this showed the direction of his mind. It steadily persevered in its evil way—and he ends by consulting a professed sorceress at Endor. The Philistines had assembled their hosts; Saul's heart trembled greatly—he had no advisers or comforters; Samuel was dead—the priests he had himself slain with the sword. He hoped, by magic rites, which he had formerly denounced, to foresee the issue of the approaching battle. God meets him even in the cave of Satanic delusions—but as an Antagonist. The reprobate king receives, by the mouth of dead Samuel, who had once anointed him, the news that he is to be "taken away in God's wrath"—that the Lord would deliver Israel, with him, into the hands of the Philistines, and that on the morrow he and his sons should be numbered with the dead.[1]

The next day "the battle went sore against him, the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers."[2] "Anguish came upon him,"[3] and he feared to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised. He desired his armour-bearer to draw his sword and thrust him through therewith. On his refusing, he fell upon his own sword, and so came to his end.

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. 19. [2] 1 Sam. xxxi. 3. [3] 2 Sam. i. 9.

Unbelief and wilfulness are the wretched characteristics of Saul's history—an ear deaf to the plainest commands, a heart hardened against the most gracious influences. Do not suppose, my brethren, because I speak thus strongly, I consider Saul's state of mind to be something very unusual. God forbid it should exist in its full misery any where among us! but surely there is not any one soul here present but what may trace in itself the elements of sins like his. Let us only reflect on our hardness of heart when attending religious ordinances, and we shall understand something of Saul's condition when he prophesied. We may be conscious to ourselves of the truth of things sacred as entirely as if we saw them; we may have no misgivings about the presence of God in Church, or about the grace of the Sacraments, and yet we often feel in as ordinary and as unconcerned a mood as if we were altogether unbelievers. Again, let us reflect on our callousness after mercies received, or after suffering. We are often in worse case even than this; for to realize the unseen world in our imagination, and feel as if we saw it, may not always be in our power. But what shall be said to wilful transgression of God's commandments, such as most of us, I fear, must recollect in ourselves, even as children, when our hearts were most tender, when we least doubted about religion, were least perplexed in matters of duty, and had all the while a full consciousness of what we were doing? What, again, shall be said to those, perhaps not few in number, who sin with the purpose beforehand of repenting afterwards?

What makes our insensibility still more alarming is, that it follows the grant of the highest privileges. Saul was hardened after the Spirit of God had come on him; ours is a sin after Baptism. There is something awful in this, if we understood it; as if that peculiar hardness of heart which we experience, in spite of whatever excellences of character we may otherwise possess, like Saul—in spite of the benevolence, or fairness, or candour, or consideration, which are the virtues of this age—was the characteristic of a soul transgressing after it had "tasted the powers of the world to come," and an earnest of the second death. May this thought, through God's mercy, rouse us to a deeper seriousness than we have at present, while Christ still continues to intercede for us, and grants us time for repentance!

SERMON IV.

EARLY YEARS OF DAVID.

1 Samuel xvi. 18.

"*Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.*"

SUCH is the account given to Saul of David, in many respects the most favoured of the ancient Saints. David is to be accounted the most favoured, first as being the principal type of Christ, next as being the author of great part of the book of Psalms, which have been used as the Church's form of devotion ever since his time. Besides, he was a chief instrument of God's providence, both in repressing idolatry and in preparing for the gospel; and he prophesied in an especial manner of that Saviour whom he prefigured and preceded. Moreover, he was the chosen king of Israel, a man after God's own heart, and blessed, not only in himself, but in his seed after him. And, further, to the history of his life a greater share is given of the inspired pages than to that of any other of God's favoured servants. Lastly, he displays in his personal character that very temper of mind in which his nation, or rather human

nature itself, is especially deficient. Pride and unbelief disgrace the history of the chosen people; the deliberate love of this world, which was the sin of Balaam, and the presumptous wilfulness which is exhibited in Saul. But David is conspicuous for an affectionate, a thankful, a loyal heart towards his God and defender, a zeal which was as fervent and as docile as Saul's was sullen, and as keen-sighted and as pure as Balaam's was selfish and double-minded. Such was the son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite; he stands midway between Abraham and his predicted seed, Judah and the Shiloh, receiving and transmitting the promises; a figure of the Christ, and an inspired prophet, living in the Church even to the end of time, in his office, his history, and his sacred writings.

Some remarks on his early life, and on his character, as therein displayed, may profitably engage our attention at the present time.

When Saul was finally rejected for not destroying the Amalekites, Samuel was bid go to Beth-lehem, and anoint, as future king of Israel, one of the sons of Jesse, who should be pointed out to him when he was come there. Samuel accordingly went thither and held a sacrifice; when, at his command, Jesse's seven sons were brought by their father, one by one, before the prophet; but none of them proved to be the choice of Almighty God. David was the youngest and out of the way, and it seemed to Jesse as unlikely that God's choice should fall upon him, as it appeared to Joseph's brethren and to his father, that he and his mother and brethren should, as his dreams foretold, bow down

before him. On Samuel's inquiring, Jesse said, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." On Samuel's bidding, he was sent for. "Now he was ruddy," the sacred historian proceeds, "and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he." After Samuel had anointed him, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." It is added, "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul."

David's anointing was followed by no other immediate mark of God's favour. He was tried by being sent back again, in spite of the promise, to the care of his sheep, till an unexpected occasion introduced him to Saul's court. The withdrawing of the Spirit of the Lord from Saul was followed by frequent attacks from an evil spirit, as a judgment upon him. His mind was depressed, and a "trouble," as it is called, came upon him, with symptoms very like those which we now refer to derangement. His servants thought that music, such, perhaps, as was used in the schools of the prophets, might soothe and restore him; and David was recommended by one of them for that purpose, in the words of the text: "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him."

David came in the power of that sacred influence whom Saul had grieved and rejected. The Spirit which inspired his tongue guided his hand also, and his sacred songs became a medicine to Saul's diseased

mind. "When the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, ... David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Thus he is first introduced to us in that character in which he still has praise in the Church, as "the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel."[1]

Saul "loved David greatly, and he became his armour-bearer;" but the first trial of his humility and patience was not over, while many other trials were in store. After a while he was a second time sent back to his sheep; and though there was war with the Philistines, and his three eldest brethren were in the army with Saul, and he had already essayed his strength in defending his father's flocks from wild beasts, and was "a mighty valiant man," yet he contentedly stayed at home as a private person, keeping his promise of greatness to himself, till his father bade him go to his brethren to take them a present from him, and report how they fared. An accident, as it appeared to the world, brought him forward. On his arrival at the army, he heard the challenge of the Philistine champion, Goliath of Gath. I need not relate how he was divinely urged to engage the giant, how he killed him, and how he was, in consequence, again raised to Saul's favour; who, with an infirmity not inconsistent with the deranged state of his mind, seems to have altogether forgotten him.

From this time began David's public life; but not yet the fulfilment of the promise made to him by

[1] 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

Samuel. He had a second and severer trial of patience to endure for many years; the trial of "being still" and doing nothing before God's time, though he had (apparently) the means in his hands of accomplishing the promise for himself. It was to this trial that Jeroboam afterwards showed himself unequal. He, too, was promised a kingdom, but he was tempted to seize upon it in his own way, and so forfeited God's protection.

David's victory over Goliath so endeared him to Saul, that he would not let him go back to his father's house. Jonathan too, Saul's son, at once felt for him a warm affection, which deepened into a firm friendship. "Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants."[1] This prosperous fortune however, did not long continue. As Saul passed through the cities from his victory over his enemies, the women of Israel came out to meet him, singing and dancing, and they said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Immediately the jealous king was "very wroth, and the saying displeased him;" his sullenness returned; he feared David as a rival; and "eyed him from that day and forward." On the morrow, as David was playing before him, as at other times, Saul threw his javelin at him. After this, Saul displaced him from his situation at his court, and sent him to the war, hoping so to rid himself of him by his falling in battle; but, by God's blessing, David returned victorious.

[1] 1 Sam. xviii. 5.

In a second war with the Philistines, David was successful as before; and Saul, overcome with gloomy and malevolent passions, again cast at him with his javelin, as he played before him, with the hope of killing him.

This repeated attempt on his life drove David from Saul's court; and for some years after, that is, till Saul's death, he was a wanderer upon the earth, persecuted in that country which was afterwards to be his own kingdom. Here, as in his victory over Goliath, Almighty God purposed to show us, that it was *His* hand which set David on the throne of Israel. David conquered his enemy by a sling and stone, in order, as he said at the time, that all . . . . . might know "that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's."[1] Now again, but in a different way, His guiding providence was displayed. As David slew Goliath without arms, so now he refrained himself and used them not, though he possessed them. Like Abraham, he traversed the land of promise "as a strange land,"[2] waiting for God's good time. Nay, far more exactly, even than to Abraham, was it given to David to act and suffer that life of faith which the Apostle describes, and by which "the elders obtained a good report." By faith he wandered about, "being destitute, afflicted, evil-entreated, in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth." On the other hand, through the same faith, he "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 47.

[2] Heb. xi. 9.

On escaping from Saul, he first went to Samuel to ask his advice. With him he dwelt some time. Driven thence by Saul he went to Bethlehem, his father's city, then to Ahimelech, the high priest, at Nob. Thence he fled, still through fear of Saul, to Achish, the Philistine king of Gath; and finding his life in danger there, he escaped to Adullam, where he was joined by his kindred, and put himself at the head of an irregular band of men, such as, in the unsettled state of the country, might be usefully and lawfully employed against the remnant of the heathen. After this he was driven to Hareth, to Keilah, which he rescued from the Philistines, to the wilderness of Ziph among the mountains, to the wilderness of Maon, to the strongholds of Engedi, to the wilderness of Paran. After a time he again betook himself to Achish, king of Gath, who gave him a city; and there it was that the news was brought him of the death of Saul in battle, which was the occasion of his elevation first to the throne of Judah, afterwards to that of all Israel, according to the promise of God made to him by Samuel.

It need not be denied that, during these years of wandering, we find in David's conduct instances of infirmity and inconsistency, and some things which, without being clearly wrong, are yet strange and startling in so favoured a servant of God. With these we are not concerned, except so far as a lesson may be gained from them for ourselves. We are not at all concerned with them as regards our estimate of David's character. That character is ascertained and sealed by

the plain word of Scripture, by the praise of Almighty God, and is no subject for our criticism; and if we find in it traits which we cannot fully reconcile with the approbation divinely given to him, we must take it in faith to be what it is said to be, and wait for the future revelations of Him who "overcomes when He is judged." Therefore I dismiss these matters now, when I am engaged in exhibiting the eminent obedience and manifold virtues of David. On the whole his situation during these years of trial was certainly that of a witness for Almighty God, one who does good and suffers for it, nay, suffers on rather than rid himself from suffering by any unlawful act.

Now, then, let us consider what was, as far as we can understand, his especial grace, what is his gift; as faith was Abraham's distinguishing virtue, meekness the excellence of Moses, self-mastery the gift especially conspicuous in Joseph.

This question may best be answered by considering the purpose for which he was raised up. When Saul was disobedient, Samuel said to him, "Thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him *a man after His own heart*, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."[1] The office to which first Saul and then David were called was different from that with which other favoured men before them had been intrusted. From the time of Moses, when Israel became a nation, God had been the king of Israel, and His chosen servants, not delegates,

[1] 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

but mere organs of His will. Moses did not direct the Israelites by his own wisdom, but he spake to them, as God spake from the pillar of the cloud. Joshua, again, was merely a sword in the hand of God. Samuel was but His minister and interpreter. God acted, the Israelites "stood still and saw" His miracles, then followed. But, when they had rejected Him from being king over them, then their chief ruler was no longer a mere organ of His power and will, but had a certain authority entrusted to him, more or less independent of supernatural direction; and acted, not so much *from* God, as *for* God, and *in the place of* God. David, when taken from the sheepfolds "to feed Jacob His people and Israel His inheritance," "fed them," in the words of the Psalm, "with a faithful and true heart; and ruled them prudently with all his power."[1] From this account of his office, it is obvious that his very first duty was that of *fidelity to Almighty God* in the trust committed to him. He had power put into his hands, in a sense in which neither Moses had it nor Samuel. He was charged with a certain office, which he was bound to administer according to his ability, so as best to promote the interests of Him who appointed him. Saul had neglected his Master's honour; but David, in this an eminent type of Christ, "came to do God's will" as a viceroy in Israel, and, as being tried and found faithful, he is especially called "a man after God's own heart."

David's peculiar excellence, then, is that of *fidelity to the trust committed to him;* a firm, uncompromising

[1] Psalm lxxviii. 71-73.

single-hearted devotion to the cause of his God, and a burning zeal for His honour.

This characteristic virtue is especially illustrated in the early years of his life which have engaged our attention. He was tried therein and found faithful; before he was put in power, it was proved whether he could obey. Till he came to the throne, he was like Moses or Samuel, an instrument in God's hands, bid do what was told him and nothing more;—having borne this trial of obedience well, in which Saul had failed, then at length he was intrusted with a sort of discretionary power, to use in his Master's service.

Observe how David was tried, and what various high qualities of mind he displayed in the course of the trial. First, the promise of greatness was given him, and Samuel anointed him. Still he stayed in the sheepfolds; and though called away by Saul for a time, yet returned contentedly when Saul released him from attendance. How difficult is it for such as know they have gifts suitable to the Church's need to refrain themselves, till God makes a way for their use! and the trial would be the more severe in David's case, in proportion to the ardour and energy of his mind; yet he fainted not under it. Afterwards for seven years, as the time appears to be, he withstood the strong temptation, ever before his eyes, of acting without God's guidance, when he had the means of doing so. Though skilful in arms, popular with his countrymen, successful against the enemy, the king's son-in-law, and on the other hand grievously injured by Saul, who

not only continually sought his life, but even suggested to him a traitor's conduct by accusing him of treason, and whose life was several times in his hands, yet he kept his honour pure and unimpeachable. He feared God and honoured the king; and this at a time of life especially exposed to the temptations of ambition.

There is a resemblance between the early history of David and that of Joseph. Both distinguished for piety in youth, the youngest and the despised of their respective brethren, they are raised, after a long trial, to a high station, as ministers of God's Providence. Joseph was tempted to a degrading adultery; David was tempted by ambition. Both were tempted to be traitors to their masters and benefactors. Joseph's trial was brief; but his conduct under it evidenced settled habits of virtue which he could call to his aid at a moment's notice. A long imprisonment followed, the consequence of his obedience, and borne with meekness and patience; but it was no part of his temptation, because, when once incurred, release was out of his power. David's trial, on the other hand, lasted for years, and grew stronger as time went on. His master, too, far from "putting all that he had into his hand,"[1] sought his life. Continual opportunity of avenging himself incited his passions; self-defence, and the Divine promise, were specious arguments to seduce his reason. Yet he mastered his heart—he was "still;"—he kept his hands clean and his lips guileless—he was loyal throughout—and in due time inherited the promise.

[1] Genesis xxxix. 4.

Let us call to mind some of the circumstances of his steadfastness recorded in the history.

He was about twenty-three years old when he slew the Philistine; yet, when placed over Saul's men of war, in the first transport of his victory, we are told he "behaved himself wisely."[1] When fortune turned, and Saul became jealous of him, still "David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him." How like is this to Joseph under different circumstances! "Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely he was afraid of him; and all Israel and Judah loved David." Again, "And David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was much set by." Here, in shifting fortunes, is evidence of that staid, composed frame of mind in his youth, which he himself describes in the one hundred and thirty-first Psalm. "My heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. . . . . Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother."

The same modest deportment marks his subsequent conduct. He consistently seeks counsel of God. When he fled from Saul he went to Samuel; afterwards we find him following the directions of the prophet Gad, and afterwards of Abiathar the high priest.[2] Here his character is in full contrast to the character of Saul.

Further, consider his behaviour towards Saul, when he had him in his power; it displays a most striking and admirable union of simple faith and unblemished loyalty.

[1] 1 Sam xviii. 5-30.

[2] Ibid. xxii. 5, 20; xxiii. 6.

Saul, while in pursuit of him, went into a cave in Engedi. David surprised him there, and his companions advised to seize him, if not to take his life. They said, "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee."[1] David, in order to show Saul how entirely his life had been in his power, arose and cut off a part of his robe privately. After he had done it, his "heart smote him" even for this slight freedom, as if it were a disrespect offered towards his king and father. "He said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." When Saul left the cave, David followed him and cried, "My Lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed himself." He hoped that he could now convince Saul of his integrity. "Wherefore hearest thou men's words," he asked, "saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee. . . . . Moreover, my father, see, yea see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see, that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee: yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. . . . . After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou

[1] 1 Sam. xxiv. 4.

pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. The Lord therefore judge . . . . and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand." Saul was for the time overcome; he said, "Is this thy voice, my son David? and Saul lifted up his voice and wept." And he said, "Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." He added, "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king." At another time David surprised Saul in the midst of his camp, and his companion would have killed him; but he said, "Destroy him not, for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?"[1] Then, as he stood over him, he meditated sorrowfully on his master's future fortunes, while he himself refrained from interfering with God's purposes. "Surely the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish." David retired from the enemy's camp; and when at a safe distance, roused Saul's guards, and blamed them for their negligent watch, which had allowed a stranger to approach the person of their king. Saul was moved the second time; the miserable man, as if waking from a dream which hung about him, said, "I have sinned; return, my son David . . . . . behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." He added, truth overcoming him, "Blessed be thou, my son David; thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail."

How beautiful are these passages in the history of the chosen king of Israel! How do they draw our

[1] 1 Sam. xxvi. 9.

hearts towards him, as one whom in his private character it must have been an extreme privilege and a great delight to know! Surely the blessings of the patriarchs descended in a united flood upon "the lion of the tribe of Judah," the type of the true Redeemer who was to come. He inherits the prompt faith and magnanimity of Abraham; he is simple as Isaac; he is humble as Jacob; he has the youthful wisdom and self-possession, the tenderness, the affectionateness, and the firmness of Joseph. And, as his own especial gift, he has an overflowing thankfulness, an ever-burning devotion, a zealous fidelity to his God, a high unshaken loyalty towards his king, an heroic bearing in all circumstances, such as the multitude of men see to be great, but cannot understand. Be it our blessedness, unless the wish be presumptuous, so to acquit ourselves in troubled times; cheerful amid anxieties, collected in dangers, generous towards enemies, patient in pain and sorrow, subdued in good fortune! How manifold are the ways of the Spirit, how various the graces which He imparts; what depth and width is there in that moral truth and virtue for which we are created! Contrast one with another the Scripture Saints; how different are they, yet how alike! how fitted for their respective circumstances, yet how unearthly, how settled and composed in the faith and fear of God! As in the Services, so in the patterns of the Church, God has met all our needs, all our frames of mind. "Is any afflicted? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing Psalms."[1] Is any in joy or in sorrow? there are saints at hand

[1] James v. 13.

to encourage and guide him. There is Abraham for nobles, Job for men of wealth and merchandise, Moses for patriots, Samuel for rulers, Elijah for reformers, Joseph for those who rise into distinction; there is Daniel for the forlorn, Jeremiah for the persecuted, Hannah for the downcast, Ruth for the friendless, the Shunammite for the matron, Caleb for the soldier, Boaz for the farmer, Mephibosheth for the subject; but none is vouchsafed to us in more varied lights, and with more abundant and more affecting lessons, whether in his history or in his writings, than he whose eulogy is contained in the words of the text, as cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters, and comely in person, and favoured by Almighty God. May we be taught, as he was, to employ the gifts, in whatever measure given us, to God's honour and glory, and to the extension of that true and only faith which is the salvation of the soul!

SERMON V.

JEROBOAM.

1 KINGS xiii. 2.

"*He cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.*"

THESE words are parts of a narrative which we hear read once a year in the Sunday Service, but which can scarcely be understood without some attention to the history which precedes it. It is a prophecy against the form of worship set up in the kingdom of Israel; let us consider what this kingdom and this worship were, and how this woe came to be uttered by a prophet of God.

When Solomon fell into idolatry, he broke what may be called his coronation oath, and at once forfeited God's favour. The essential duty of a king of the chosen people was to act as God's representative, to govern for Him. David was called a man after God's heart, because he was thus faithful; he fulfilled his trust. Solomon failed, failed in the very one duty which, as king of Israel, he was bound to perform.

In consequence, a message came from Almighty God, revealing what the punishment of his sin would be. He might be considered as having forfeited his kingdom, for himself and his posterity. For David's sake, however, this extreme sentence was not pronounced upon him. First, since the promise had been made to David that his son should reign after him, though that son was the very transgressor, yet *he* was spared the impending evil on account of the promise. As an honour to David, Solomon's reign closed without any open infliction of divine vengeance; only with the presage of it. "Forasmuch as this is done of thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son."[1] A still further mitigation of punishment was granted, still for David's sake. It had been promised David, "I will set up thy seed after thee, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. . . . . If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men; but My mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee."[2] Accordingly, when Solomon had sinned, and the kingdom was rent from him, still holy David's seed was not utterly put away before a new king, as the family of Saul had fallen before David; part of the kingdom was still left to the descendants of the faithful king. "Howbeit, I will not rend away *all* the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son," Solomom's son, "for *David My servant's sake.*" This

[1] 1 Kings xi. 11, 12. [2] 2 Sam. vii. 12–15.

one tribe was the tribe of Judah, David's own tribe; to which part of Benjamin was added, as being in the neighbourhood. And this kingdom, over which David's line reigned for four hundred years after him, is called the kingdom of Judah.—But with this kingdom of Judah we are not now concerned; but with that larger portion of the tribes, which was rent away from David's house, and forms what is called the kingdom of Israel.

These were the circumstances under which the division of the kingdom was made. Solomon seems to have allowed himself in tyrannical conduct towards his subjects, as well as in idolatry. On his death the people came to his son Rehoboam, at Shechem, and said, "Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee." Rehoboam was rash enough to answer, after three days' deliberation, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."[1] Now every one sees that Rehoboam here acted very wrongly, and Solomon too, as I have said, had sinned grievously before him. His oppression of the people was a *sin;* yet, you will observe, the people had no right to complain. They had brought this evil on themselves; they had obstinately courted and struggled after it. They would have "a king like the nations," a despotic king; and now they had one, they were discontented. Samuel had not only earnestly and solemnly protested against this measure, as

[1] 1 Kings xii. 4, 14.

an offence against their Almighty Governor, but had actually forewarned them of the evils which despotic power would introduce among them. "He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; he will set them to ear his ground and to reap his harvest and to make his instruments of war. He will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, and give them to his servants." The warning ends thus: "And ye shall cry out in that day, *because of your king which ye shall have chosen you,* and the Lord will not hear you in that day."[1] These were Samuel's words beforehand. Now all this had come upon them: as they had sown, so had they reaped. And, as matters stood, their best course would have been contentment, resignation; it was their duty to bear the punishment of their national self-will. But one sin was not enough for them. They proceeded, as men commonly do, to mend (as they considered) their first sin, by a fresh one;—they rebelled against their king. "What portion have we in David?" they said, "neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel—now see to thine own house, David."[2] Ten tribes out of twelve revolted from their king in that day. Here they were quite inexcusable. Even putting it out of the question that they had brought the evil on themselves, still, independently of this, their king's tyranny did not justify their sudden, unhesitating, violent rebellion. He was acting against

[1] 1 Sam. viii. 11-18. [2] 1 Kings xi. 16.

no engagement or stipulation. Because their king did not do his duty to them, this was no reason they should not do their duty to him. Say that he was cruel and rapacious, still they might have safely trusted the miraculous providence of God, to have restrained the king by His prophets, and to have brought them safely through. This would have been the way of *faith;* but they took the matter into their own hands, and got into further difficulty. And I wish you to observe, that all the evil arose from this original fault, worked out in its consequences through centuries, viz., their having a king at all.

So much, then, for their first sin, and their second sin. To continue further the history of their downward course, we must look to the man whom they made the leader of their rebellion. This was Jeroboam.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had been, during Solomon's life-time, appointed to collect the tribute from the tribe of Ephraim, the most powerful of the ten tribes; a situation which gave him influence and authority in that part of the country. The king appointed him, "seeing the young man that he was industrious." We are told, too, that he was "a mighty man of valour."[1] Thus honoured by Solomon, he abused his trust, even in the king's life-time, by rebelling against him. "Jeroboam, Solomon's servant, even he lift up his hand against the king." When Solomon, in consequence, "sought to kill him," he fled to Egypt, where Shishak, the king, sheltered him. On Solomon's death he returned to his country, and at the invitation of the revolting tribes,

[1] 1 Kings xi. 28.

headed their rebellion. "It came to pass when all Israel (*i.e.* the ten tribes) heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only."[1]

Now, that Jeroboam was an instrument in God's hand to chastise Solomon's sin is plain; and there is no difficulty in conceiving how a wicked man, without its being any excuse to him, still may bring about the Divine purposes. But in Jeroboam's particular case there *is* this difficulty at first sight; that Almighty God had seemed to sanction his act by *promising* him, in Solomon's life-time, the kingdom of the ten tribes. The prophet Ahijah had met him, and delivered to him a message from "the Lord, the God of Israel." "I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes *to thee*." And it was on account of this prophecy that Jeroboam "lifted up his hand against the king." On a little consideration, however, we shall find no difficulty here: for though Almighty God promised him the kingdom, He did not tell him to *gain it for himself;* and, if we must not do evil that good may come, surely we may not do evil that a promise may be fulfilled; and to "rebel against his lord" (in the words of Scripture) was a plain indisputable sin. God, who made the promise, could of course fulfil it in His own time. He did not require man's crime to bring it about. It was, of course, an insult to His holiness and power to suppose He did. Jeroboam ought to have waited

[1] 1 Kings xii. 20.

patiently God's time; this would have been the part of true faith. But it had always been, as on this occasion, the sin of the Israëlites, to outrun God's providence; and even when they chose to pursue His ends, to wish to work them out in their own way. They never would "be still and know that He was God," wait His word and follow His guidance. Thus, when they first took possession of the promised land, they were told to cast the nations out, and utterly destroy all that did not leave the country. They soon became weary of this, and thought they had found out a better way. They thought it wiser to spare their enemies, and form alliances with them and put them under tribute. This brought them first into idolatry, then into captivity. When Samuel rescued them, and their hopes revived, their first act was to choose a king like the nations, contrary to God's will. And Jeroboam, in this instance, as a special emblem of the whole people in the rebellion itself, had not patience to wait, and faith to trust God, that "what He had promised He was able also to perform." That it was *a trial* to Jeroboam we need not deny; of course it was. He was tried and found wanting. Had he withstood the temptation, and refrained himself till lawfully called to reign, untold blessings might have been showered on him and on his people, who, in the actual history, were all cut off for their sins. He was not the first man who had thus been tried. David had been promised Saul's kingdom, and anointed thereunto by Samuel, years before he came into possession; yet, though he was persecuted by Saul, and had his life several times in his power, still

he would not lift up his hand against his king. He had the faith of his forefather Abraham, who, though promised the land he dwelt in, wandered in it as a pilgrim, without daring to occupy it; wandered on with a band of trained servants at his command, who might have gained for him a territory had he desired it, as certainly as they smote Chedorlaomer and recovered Lot and his goods. David inherited this patient faith, and through it "obtained the promise," and founded a throne in righteousness and truth. Had Jeroboam followed it, he, too, might have been the father of a line of kings; he might have been the instrument and object of God's promised favour towards the house of Joseph; satisfying, in his own person, the prophecies which Jacob and Moses[1] had delivered, and which Joshua, himself an Ephraimite, had begun to fulfil, and founding a dominion not inferior in glory to that of Judah and Jerusalem.

Jeroboam, then, is not excused, though Ahijah prophesied; but, next, let us inquire how did he act when at length seated on the throne? It is not surprising, after such a beginning, that he sinned further and more grievously. When a man begins to do wrong, he cannot answer for himself how far he may be carried on. He does not see beforehand, he cannot know where he shall find himself after the sin is committed. One false step forces him to another, for retreat is impossible. This, which occurs every day, is instanced, first, in the history of the whole people, and then, in the history of Jeroboam. For awhile, indeed,

[1] Gen. xlix. 22-26; Deut. xxxiii. 13-17; cf. 1 Kings xi. 38.

he seemed to prosper. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had brought an extraordinary force of chosen men against him; but Almighty God, willing there should be no blood shed, designing to punish Solomon's idolatry, and intending to leave Jeroboam to himself, to work out the fruit of his rebellion, and then to judge and smite him with His own arm, would not allow the war. The prophet Shemaiah was sent to Rehoboam to put an end to it, and Rehoboam obeyed.

Thus Jeroboam seemed to have everything his own way; but soon a difficulty arose which he had thought light of, if he thought of it at all. The Jewish nation was not only a kingdom, but a church, a religious as well as a political body; and Jeroboam found, before long, that in setting up a new kingdom in Israel, he must set up a new religion too.

It was ordered in the Law of Moses, that all the men throughout Israel should go up to Jerusalem to worship three times a year; but Jerusalem was, at this time, the capital of the kingdom of Judah, the rival kingdom; and Jeroboam clearly saw that if his new subjects were allowed to go up thither, they could not remain his subjects long, but would return to their former allegiance. Here, then, a second false step was necessary to complete the first; for a false step that must have been which, as it would seem, required for its protection a violation of the Law of Moses. He, doubtless, argued that he was obliged to do what he did, that he could not help himself. It is true;—sin *is* a hard master; once sold over to it, we cannot break our chain; one evil concession requires another.

"Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam, king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel."[1] A melancholy counsel it was: he resolved to select places for religious worship in his own kingdom. This was against the Law, of course; but what he did was worse than this. He could not build a Temple like Solomon's, and yet he needed some visible sign of the presence of God. Almighty God had bid the Israelites take to themselves no sign of His presence, no likeness of Him; but Jeroboam thought he could not do better than set up two figures of gold, one at each end of his country, not, indeed, as representations (he would argue), but as emblems and memorials of the true God, and as marking the established place of worship. It is probable that the age of Solomon, a season of peace, when the arts were cultivated and an intercourse opened with foreign nations, was a season also of a peculiar religious corruption, such as had never occurred before. All through their history, indeed, the Israelites had opposed God's will; but by this time they had learned to defend their disobedience by argument, and to transgress upon a system. Jeroboam's sins, in regard to religious worship, were not single, or inconsistent with each other, but depended on this principle—that there is no need to attend to the positive laws and the outward

[1] 1 Kings xii. 26–28.

forms and ceremonies of religion, so that we attend to the substance. In setting up these figures of gold, it was far from his intention to oppose the worship of the One True God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Saviour of Israel; the words he used on the occasion, and the course of the history, show this. He thought he was only altering the discipline of the Church, as we should now call it, and he might plausibly ask, What did that matter? He was but putting another emblem of God in the place of the Cherubim. He made merely such alterations as change of circumstances and the course of events rendered indispensable. He was in difficulties, and had to consider, not what was best, or what he himself should choose, had he to choose, but what was practicable.

The figure he adopted, as a memorial of Almighty God, was in the shape of an ox or calf, the same which the Israelites had set up in the wilderness. It is hardly known what is the meaning of the emblem, which, doubtless, came from Egypt. The ox is thought to be the emblem of life or strength; and, being set up as a religious monument, might be intended to signify God's creative power. But, however, this might be, it was, at any rate, a direct and open transgression of the second Commandment. "The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan."

Even this open idolatrous worship, not merely tole-

rated, but established, even this was not the last sin of this unhappy man, who had begun a course of wickedness upon system, and then left it as an inheritance for others more abandoned than himself to perfect. The tribe of Levi, who were especially consecrated to religious purposes, had their possessions not in one place, but scattered up and down the country. It was not to be supposed that they, who executed judgment upon the sin of the calf in the wilderness, would tamely suffer this renewal of the ancient offence in a more heinous shape. They refused to countenance the idolatrous worship, and Jeroboam, led on by hard necessity, cast them out of the country, got possession of their cities and lands, and put in priests of his own making in their stead. "He made a house of high places," and "he and his sons cast off the Levites from executing the priest's office unto the Lord, and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made; priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi."[1] And he changed the solemn feast days, and dared to offer incense, himself intruding first, for example's sake, into the sacred office.

In consequence of these impious proceedings, not only 'the priests and Levites, that were in all Israel," left his kingdom and retired to Judea, but also, "after them, out of all the" other "tribes, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers."

[1] 1 Kings xii. 31; 2 Chron. xi. 14, 15.

Truly this was an ill-omened commencement of his reign. He had made it impossible for pious Israelites to remain in the country. The irreligious alone held by him. Jeroboam ruled in a country given up, as it seemed, to evil spirits. So true is it, in a kindred sense to that in which the words were used by Samuel, that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."[1]

Now, then, we come to the concluding scene of this course of crime, perpetrated by one man—the transaction to which the text belongs.

It was on the new feast day "which he had devised of his own heart," and at Bethel where the idol was set up. The people were collected from all parts of the country, and the king "offered upon the altar and burnt incense." Such was the formal inauguration of the false religion in God's own hallowed country, answering to that sacred solemnity when Solomon offered the prayer of dedication in the Temple. The glory of God had come down on that chosen place in token of His favour, and now at Bethel, which He had once specially visited in an earlier age, He suffered not the heathen act to pass without an indication of His wrath. One of His prophets was sent from Judah to attend the festival; but, as if he were entering a country infected by the pestilence, he was bid not to enter into no house, nor eat nor drink while he was in it, nay, he was not even to return to his home the same way by which he came, as if his feet must not tread the polluted earth twice.

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 23

When the prophet came, he uttered his message before the apostate king. It was a prophecy; a prophecy set up as a witness against the complicated sins of the people, the destiny of that rebellious and idolatrous kingdom stamped upon it in the day of its nativity. The man of God addressed the altar, as not deigning to speak to Jeroboam, and foretold its fate. He announced that, after no long time, the idolatrous power should be destroyed, and that very altar should last long enough to see its fall; for upon it, fragrant as it now was with incense, the impious priests should be sacrificed, and men's bones burned; moreover, that all this should be done by a prince of the house of Judah; thus intimating that David's royal line would outlive the revolting kingdom of Israel. "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." To show his Divine commission, the prophet gave the word, and the altar was miraculously rent in twain, and the ashes of the sacrifice scattered on the ground. Nothing could be more public than a judgment like this, denounced from God Himself, after Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had not been allowed to take the matter into his own hands. And to make the occurrence still more impressive, two further signs were added. Jeroboam stretched forth his hand to seize the prophet; it was instantly shrivelled up, so that he could not pull it to him again. At the prophet's prayer, it was restored. The second miracle was still

more awful. The prophet, wearied with his journey, was, on his return, persuaded by a bad man to eat and drink, against the express word of God declared to him. An immediate judgment followed. As he sat at table, his seducer was constrained to declare to him his punishment—that his body should not come into the sepulchre of his fathers; and as he went home, a lion, God's second instrument for its infliction, met and slew him, yet did not devour him, nor touch the ass he rode on, nor molest other passengers he met, but, fixed to the spot by miracle, he stood over the prophet's body, a sign, more truly than the idols at Dan and Bethel, of God's power, holiness, and severe justice, and suggesting, throughout all Israel, the fearful argument—"If God so punish his own children, what will be the final, though delayed, punishment of the wicked? If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"[1]

As for Jeroboam, in spite of all this, "after this thing he returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places; whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places."[2] Such was his life.

At the close of his reign, he lost even his earthly prosperity. "The Lord struck him, and he died." Such was his end.

His family was soon cut off from the throne; and after all his wise counsels and bold plans he has left

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 18.

[2] 1 Kings xiii. 33.

but his name and title to posterity, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin." Such is his memorial.

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited."[1]

It requires but a very few words to show the application of this history to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. So strongly does it pourtray to us the existing disorders and schisms in the Christian Church —the profane and tyrannical usage which it meets with from the world—that the only question which can possibly arise in the mind is, whether it is allowable to apply it, and whether, as the events are alike, their respective character and their issue are like each other also. This, I say, is the only question, whether we may, without blame, judge of what we see by the light of what we read in the history of Israel; and I wish all readers would clearly understand that this is the only question. If the deeds of Israel and Jeroboam may be taken as types of what has been acted under the Gospel for centuries past, can we doubt that schism, innovation in doctrine, a counterfeit priesthood, sacrilege, and violence, are sins so heinous and crying, that there is no judgment too great for them, no woe which we may not expect will ultimately fall on the systems which have been born in them, and the lineage of their

[1] Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

perpetrators? What other lesson can we draw from the history but this? but that we ought to draw a lesson, is plain from the repeated declaration of St. Paul:—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our teaching." "All these things happened unto them as types, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." St. Peter also and St. Jude expressly apply occurrences in the Old Testament to parallels under the Gospel.[1]

May God give us the will and the power to realize to our minds this most serious truth, and fairly to follow it out in its necessary consequences! And may He of His mercy have pity upon our poor distracted Church, rescue it from the dominion of the heathen, and grant that "the world's course may be so peaceably ordered by His governance, that" it and all branches of the One Church Catholic "may joyfully serve Him in all godly quietness!"

[1] Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Pet. ii. 1-15; Jude 5-11.

SERMON VI.

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

MATT. xix. 17.

"If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

LET a plain man read the Gospels with a serious and humble mind, and as in God's presence, and I suppose he would be in no perplexity at all about the meaning of these words. They are clear as the day at first reading, and the rest of our Saviour's teaching does but corroborate their obvious meaning. I conceive that if such a man, after reading them and the other similar passages which occur in the Gospels, were told that he had not mastered the sense of them, and that in matter of fact to attempt to enter into life by keeping the commandments, to attempt to keep the commandments in order to enter into life, were suspicious and dangerous modes of expression, and that the use of them showed an ignorance of the real spirit of Christ's doctrine, he would in despair say, "Then truly Scripture is not a book for the multitude, but for those only who have educated and refined understandings, so as to see things in a sense different from their obvious meaning."

Or, again, supposing one, who disbelieved our Lord's divinity, fell in with persons who did thus consider that to keep the commandments by way of entering into life, was a sign of spiritual blindness in a man, not to say of pride and reprobation; do you suppose there would be any possibility of their silencing him as regards his own particular heresy, with Scripture proofs of the sacred truth which he denied? For can the doctrine that Christ is God, be more clearly enunciated than the precept, that, to enter into life, we must keep the commandments? and is it not the way to make men think that Scripture has no definite meaning at all, and that each man may fairly put his own sense upon it, when they see our Lord's plain directions thus explained away?

The occasion of this unreal interpretation of Scripture, which, in fact, does exist among us to a great extent, is, that St. Paul, in some passages of his Epistles, teaches us that we are accepted and saved by faith; and it is argued that, since he wrote under the guidance of the promised Spirit, his is the true Gospel mode of Speech, and that the language of Christ, the Eternal Word of God, must be drawn aside, however violently, into that certain meaning which is assumed as the only true sense of St. Paul. *How* our Divine Master's words are explained away, what ingenious refinements are used to deprive us of the plain and solemn sense which they bear on their very front, it profits not here to inquire; still no one, it may be presumed, can deny, that, whether rightly or wrongly, they *are* turned aside in a very unexpected

way, unless rather they are put out of sight altogether, and forgotten, as if superseded by the Apostolic Epistles. Doubtless those Epistles are inspired by the Holy Spirit: but He was sent from Christ to glorify and illuminate the words of Christ. The two heavenly witnesses cannot speak diversely; faith will listen to them both. Surely our duty is, neither to resist the One nor the Other; but humbly to consider whether there is not some one substantial doctrine which they teach in common; and that with God's blessing I will now attempt to do.

How are we sinners to be accepted by Almighty God? Doutless the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the *meritorious cause* of our justification, and His Church is the *ordained instrument* of conveying it to us. But our present question relates to another subject, to *our own part* in appropriating it; and here I say Scripture makes two answers, saying sometimes "Believe, and you shall be saved," and sometimes "Keep the commandments, and you shall be saved." Let us consider whether these two modes of speech are not reconcilable with each other.

What is meant by faith? it is to feel in good earnest that we are creatures of God; it is a practical perception of the unseen world; it is to understand that this world is not enough for our happiness, to look beyond it on towards God, to realize His presence, to wait upon Him, to endeavour to learn and to do His will, and to seek our good from Him. It is not a mere temporary strong act or impetuous feeling of the mind, an impression or a view coming upon it, but it is a

habit, a state of mind, lasting and consistent. To have faith in God is to surrender one's-self to God, humbly to put one's interests, or to wish to be allowed to put them into His hands who is the Sovereign Giver of all good.

Now, again, let me ask, what is obedience? it is the obvious mode, suggested by nature, of a creature's conducting himself in God's sight, who fears Him as his Maker, and knows that, as a sinner, he has especial cause for fearing Him. Under such circumstances he "will do what he can" to please Him, as the woman whom our Lord commended. He will look every way to see how it is possible to approve himself to Him, and will rejoice to find any service which may stand as a sort of proof that He is in earnest. And he will find nothing better as an offering, or as an evidence, than obedience to that Holy Law, which conscience tells him has been given us by God Himself; that is, he will be diligent in doing all his duty as far as he knows it and can do it.—Thus, as is evident, the two states of mind are altogether one and the same: it is quite indifferent whether we say a man seeks God in faith, or say he seeks Him by obedience; and whereas Almighty God has graciously declared He will receive and bless all that seek Him, it is quite indifferent whether we say, He accepts those who *believe*, or those who *obey*. To believe is to look beyond this world to God, and to obey is to look beyond this world to God; to believe is of the heart, and to obey is of the heart; to believe is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of trust; and to obey is not a solitary act, but a consistent habit of

doing our duty in all things. I do not say that faith and obedience do not stand for separate ideas in our minds, but they stand for nothing more; they are not divided one from the other in fact. They are but one thing viewed differently.

If it be said that a man may keep from sin and do good without thinking of God, and therefore without being religious or having faith; this is true, but nothing to the purpose. It is, alas! too true that men often do what is in itself right, not from the thought of God, but for some purpose of this world; and all of us have our best doings sullied by the intrusion of bad thoughts and motives. But all this, I say, is nothing to our present purpose; for if a man does right, *not* for religion's sake but the world's sake, though he happens to be doing right, that is, to perform outwardly good actions, this is in no sense *obedience*, which is of the *heart*. And it was obedience, not mere outward good conduct, which I said belonged to the same temper of mind as faith. And I repeat it, for by obedience is meant obedience, not to the world, but to God—and habitually to obey God, is to be constant in looking on to God—and to look on to Almighty God, is to have faith; so that to "live by faith," or "walk by faith" (according to the Scripture phrases), that is, to have a habit of faith, and to be obedient, are one and the same general character of mind;—viewed as sitting at Jesus' feet, it is called *faith;* viewed as running to do His will, it is called *obedience.*

If, again, it be said that a man may be obedient and yet proud of being so, that is, obedient, without having

faith, I would maintain, on the other hand, that in matter of fact a man is proud, or (what is sometimes called) self-righteous, not when obedient, but in proportion to his disobedience. To be proud is to rest on one's-self, which they are most chargeable with who do least; but a really obedient mind is necessarily dissatisfied with itself, and looks out of itself for help, from understanding the greatness of its task; in other words, in proportion as a man obeys, is he driven to faith, in order to learn the remedy of the imperfections of his obedience.

All this is clear and obvious to every thinking man; and this view of the subject was surely present to the minds of the inspired writers of Scripture—for this reason, because they use the two words, faith and obedience, indiscriminately, sometimes declaring we shall be accepted, saved, by *believing*, sometimes by *doing our duty*. And they so interchange these two conditions of God's favour, so quickly pass to and fro from the one view to the other, as to show that in truth the two do not differ, except in idea. If these apparently *two* conditions were merely connected, not substantially one, surely the inspired writers would compare them one with the other—surely they would be consistent in appropriating distinct offices to each. But, in very truth, from the beginning to the end of Scripture, the one voice of inspiration consistently maintains, not an uniform contrast between faith and obedience, but this *one* doctrine, that the only way of salvation open to us is the *surrender* of ourselves to our Maker in all things —supreme devotion, resignation of our will, the turning

with all our heart to God; and this state of mind is ascribed in Scripture sometimes to the believing, sometimes to the obedient, according to the particular passage; and it is no matter to which it is ascribed.

Now, I will cite some passages from Scripture in proof of what I have said. The Psalmist says, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully."[1] Here *obedience* is described as securing a man's salvation. But, in another Psalm, we read, "How great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that *trust in Thee!*"[2] Here, trust or faith is the condition of God's favour. Again, in other Psalms, first, "What man is he that desireth life? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. *Depart from evil and do good,* seek peace and pursue it." . . . . Next, it is said, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a *broken heart,* and saveth such as be of a *contrite spirit.*" Lastly, "None of them that *trust in* Him shall be desolate." Here, obedience, repentance, and faith, are successively mentioned as the means of obtaining God's favour; and why all of them, but because they are all names for one and the same substantial character, only viewed on different sides of it, that one character of mind which is pleasing and acceptable to Almighty God? Again, the prophet Isaiah says, "Thou

[1] Ps. xv. 1, 2; xxiv. 4. [2] Ps. xxxi. 19; xxxiv. 12-14, 18, 22.

wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."[1] Yet, in the preceding verse he had proclaimed, "Open ye the gates (of the heavenly city) that the righteous nation, which keepeth the Truth, may enter in." In like manner Solomon says, "By *mercy and truth* iniquity is purged:" Daniel, that "*mercy to the poor*" is a "breaking off of sin," and "an healing of error:" Nehemiah prays God to "remember him," and "not wipe out his *good deeds for the House of his God;*" yet Habakkuk says, the "just shall live by his *faith.*"[2]

What honour our Saviour put on faith I need hardly remind you. He blessed Peter's confession, and, in prospect, those who, though they saw Him not on earth, as Thomas, yet believe; and in His miracles of mercy, *faith* was the condition He exacted for the exertion of His powers of healing and restoration. On one occasion He says, "*All things* are possible to him that *believeth.*"[3] Yet, afterwards, in His solemn account of the last Judgment, He tells us that it is *obedience to His will* which will then receive His blessing, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."[4] Again, the Angel said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God;" and Cornelius is described as "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God alway."[5] Yet it is in the very same

[1] Isaiah xxvi. 2, 3.
[2] Prov. xvi. 6; Dan. iv. 27; Neh. xiii. 14; Hab. ii. 4.
[3] Mark ix. 23. [4] Matt. xxv. 40. [5] Acts x. 2.

Book of Acts that we read St. Paul's words, "*Believe*, and thou shalt be saved."[1] His Epistles afford us still more striking instances of the intimate association existing in the Apostle's thoughts between believing and obeying, as though exhibitions of one and the same spiritual character of mind. For instance, he says that Abraham was accepted (not by ceremonial observances, but) by *faith*, yet St. James says he was accepted by works of *obedience*. The meaning is clear, that Abraham found favour in God's sight, *because he gave himself* up to Him: this is faith or obedience, whichever we please to call it. No matter whether we say, Abraham was favoured because his faith embraced God's *promises*, or because his obedience cherished God's *commands*, for God's commands are promises, and His promises commands to a heart devoted to Him; so that, as there is no substantial difference between command and promise, so there is likewise none between obedience and faith. Perhaps it is scarcely correct even to say that faith comes first and obedience follows as an inseparable second step, and that faith, as being the first step, is accepted. For not a single act of faith can be named but what has in it the nature of obedience, that is, implies the making an effort and a consequent victory. What is the faith which earns Baptism—the very faith which appropriates the free gift of grace—but an acquiescence of the reason in the Gospel Mysteries? Even the thief upon the Cross had (it would seem) to rule his reason, to struggle against sight, and to bring under pride and obstinacy,

[1] Acts xvi. 31.

when he turned to Him as his Saviour, who seemed to mortal eyes only his fellow-sufferer. A mere confession or prayer, which might not be really an act of obedience in us, might be such in him. On the other hand, faith does not cease with the first act, but continues. It works with obedience. In proportion as a man believes, so he obeys; they come together, and grow together, and last through life. Neither are perfect; both are on the same level of imperfection; they keep pace with each other; in proportion to the imperfection of one, so is the imperfection of the other; and, as the one advances, so does the other also.

And now I have described the temper of mind which has, in every age, been acceptable to Almighty God, in its two aspects of faith and obedience. In every age "the righteous shall live by faith." And it is remarkable that these words of the prophet Habakkuk, which St. Paul quotes three several times, to show the identity of true religion under all dispensations, do also represent it under these very two characteristics, Righteousness and Faith.

Before closing the subject, however, it may be necessary, in a few words, to explain *why* it is that, in some parts of St. Paul's Epistles, a certain stress is laid upon faith over and above the other parts of a religious character, in our justification. The reason seems to be as follows: the Gospel being pre-eminently a covenant of grace, faith is so far of more excellence than other virtues, because it confesses this beyond all others. Works of obedience witness to God's just claims upon us, not to His mercy: but faith comes

empty-handed, hides even its own worth, and does but point at that precious scheme of redemption which God's love has devised for sinners. Hence, it is the frame of mind especially suitable to us, and is said, in a special way, to justify us, because it glorifies God, witnessing that He accepts those and those only, who confess they are not worthy to be accepted.

On this account, faith has a certain prerogative of dignity under the Gospel. At the same time we must never forget that the more usual mode of doctrine both with Christ and His Apostles is to refer our acceptance to obedience to the commandments, not to faith; and this, as it would appear, from a merciful anxiety in their teaching, lest, in contemplating God's grace, we should forget our own duties.

To conclude. If, after all, to believe and to obey be but different characteristics of one and the same state of mind, in what a most serious error are whole masses of men involved at this day, who are commonly considered religious! It is undeniable that there are multitudes who would avow with confidence and exultation that they put obedience only in the second place in their religious scheme, as if it were rather a necessary consequence of faith than requiring a direct attention for its own sake; a something subordinate to it, rather than connatural and contemporaneous with it. It is certain, however startling it is to reflect upon it, that numbers do not in any true sense believe that they shall be judged; they believe in a coming judgment as regards the wicked, but they do not believe that all men, that they themselves personally, will undergo it.

I wish from my heart that the persons in question could be persuaded to read Scripture with their own eyes, and take it in a plain and natural way, instead of perplexing themselves with their human systems, and measuring and arranging its inspired declarations by an artificial rule. Are they quite sure that in the next world they will be able to remember these strained interpretations in their greatest need? Then surely, while we wait for the Judgment, the luminous sentences of Divine Truth will come over us, first one and then another, and we shall wonder how we ever misunderstood them! Then will they confront us in their simplicity and entireness, and we shall understand that nothing can be added to them, nothing taken away. Then at length, if not before, we shall comprehend our Lord's assurance, that "He will reward every man according to his works;" St. Paul's, that "we must all appear before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" St. Peter's, that "He is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead;" St. James's, that "a man is justified by works and not by faith only;" and St. John's, that "they are blessed that do His commandments, that they might have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."[1] Whatever else may be true, these declarations, so solemnly, so repeatedly made, must hold good in their plain and obvious sense, and may not be infringed or superseded.

[1] Matt. xvi. 27; 2 Cor. v. 10; Acts x. 42; James ii. 24; Rev. xxii. 14.

So many testimonies combined are "an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast," and if they mean something else than what they all say, what part of Scripture can we dare trust in future as a guide and consolation?

"O Lord, Thy Word endureth for ever in heaven!" but the expositions of men are written on the sea-shore, and are blotted out before the evening.

SERMON VII.

CHRISTIAN REPENTANCE.

LUKE xv. 18, 19.

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

THE very best that can be said of the fallen and redeemed race of Adam is, that they confess their fall, and condemn themselves for it, and try to recover themselves. And this state of mind, which is in fact the only possible religion left to sinners, is represented to us in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who is described as receiving, then abusing, and then losing God's blessings, suffering from their loss, and brought to himself by the experience of suffering. A poor service indeed to offer, but the best we can offer, to make obedience our second choice when the world deserts us, when that is dead and lost to us wherein we were held!

Let it not be supposed, because I say this, that I think that in the life-time of each one of us there is some clearly marked date at which he began to seek God, and from which he has served him faithfully. This may be so in the case of this person or that, but

it is far from being the rule. We may not so limit the mysterious work of the Holy Ghost. He condescends to plead with us continually, and what He cannot gain from us at one time, He gains at another. Repentance is a work carried on at diverse times, and but gradually and with many reverses perfected. Or rather, and without any change in the meaning of the word repentance, it is a work never complete, never entire—unfinished both in its inherent imperfection, and on account of the fresh and fresh occasions which arise for exercising it. We are ever sinning, we must ever be renewing our sorrow and our purpose of obedience, repeating our confessions and our prayers for pardon. No need to look back to the first beginnings of our repentance, should we be able to trace these, as something solitary and peculiar in our religious course; we are *ever* but beginning; the most perfect Christian is to himself but a beginner, a penitent prodigal, who has squandered God's gifts, and comes to Him to be tried over again, not as a son, but as a hired servant.

In this parable, then, we need not understand the description of the returning prodigal to imply that there is a state of disobedience and subsequent state of conversion definitely marked in the life of Christians generally. It describes the state of all Christians at all times, and is fulfilled more or less, according to circumstances, in this case or that; fulfilled in one way and measure at the beginning of our Christian course, and in another at the end. So I shall now consider it, viz., as describing the *nature* of all true repentance.

1. First, observe, the prodigal son said, "I am no

more worthy to be called Thy son, make me as one of Thy hired servants." We know that God's service is perfect freedom, not a servitude; but this it is in the case of those who have long served Him; at first it *is* a kind of servitude, it is a task till our likings and tastes come to be in unison with those which God has sanctioned. It is the happiness of Saints and Angels in heaven to take pleasure in their duty, and nothing but their duty; for their mind goes that one way, and pours itself out in obedience to God, spontaneously and without thought or deliberation, just as man *sins* naturally. This is the state to which we are tending if we give ourselves up to religion; but in its commencement, religion is necessarily almost a task and a formal service. When a man begins to see his wickedness, and resolves on leading a new life, he asks, *What must I do?* he has a wide field before him, and he does not know how to enter it. He must be bid to do some particular plain acts of obedience, to fix him. He must be told to go to Church regularly, to say his prayers morning and evening, and statedly to read the Scriptures. This will limit his efforts to a certain end, and relieve him of the perplexity and indecision which the greatness of his work at first causes. But who does not see that this going to Church, praying in private, and reading Scripture, must in his case be, in great measure, what is called a form and a task? Having been used to do as he would, and indulge himself, and having very little understanding or liking for religion, he cannot take pleasure in these religious duties; they will necessarily be a weariness to him; nay, he will not be able even to

give his attention to them. Nor will he see the use of them; he will not be able to find they make him better though he repeat them again and again. Thus his obedience at first is altogether that of a hired servant, "The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth."[1] This is Christ's account of him. The servant is not in his lord's confidence, does not understand what he his aiming at, or why he commands this and forbids that. He executes the commands given him, he goes hither and thither, punctually, but by the mere letter of the command. Such is the state of those who *begin* religious obedience. They do not see anything come of their devotional or penitential services, nor do they take pleasure in them; they are obliged to defer to God's word simply because it is His word; to do which implies faith indeed, but also shows they are in that condition of a servant which the prodigal felt himself to be in at best.

Now, I insist upon this, because the conscience of a repentant sinner is often uneasy at finding religion a task to him. He thinks he ought to rejoice in the Lord at once, and it is true he is often told to do so; he is often taught to begin by cultivating high affections. Perhaps he is even warned against offering to God what is termed a *formal service.* Now this is reversing the course of a Christian's life. The prodigal son judged better, when he begged to be made one of his father's servants—he knew his place. We *must begin* religion with what looks like a form. Our fault will be, not in beginning it as a form, but in continuing it as a form.

[1] John xv. 15.

For it is our duty to be ever striving and praying to *enter* into the real spirit of our services, and in proportion as we understand them and love them, they will cease to be a form and a task, and will be the real expressions of our minds. Thus shall we gradually be changed in heart from servants into sons of Almighty God. And though from the very first, we must be taught to look to Christ as the Saviour of sinners, still His very love will frighten, while it encourages us, from the thought of our ingratitude. It will fill us with remorse and dread of judgment, for we are not as the heathen, we have received privileges, and have abused them.

2. So much, then, on the condition of the repentant sinner; next, let us consider the motives which actuate him in his endeavours to serve God. One of the most natural, and among the first that arise in the mind, is that of *propitiating* Him. When we are conscious to ourselves of having offended another, and wish to be forgiven, of course we look about for some *means* of setting ourselves right with him. If it be a slight offence, our overtures are in themselves enough, the mere expression that we wish our fault forgotten. But if we have committed some serious injury, or behaved with any special ingratitude, we, for a time, keep at a distance, from a doubt how we shall be received. If we can get a common friend to mediate in our behalf, our purpose is best answered. But even in that case we are not satisfied with leaving our interests to another; we try to do something for ourselves; and on perceiving any signs of compassion or placability in the person offended, we attempt to approach him with pro-

pitiations of our own, either very humble confession, or some acceptable service. It was under this feeling that Jacob attempted to conciliate the governor of Egypt (whom he knew not to be his son Joseph), with a present of the best fruits of the land, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." And this holds good when applied to the case of sinners desiring forgiveness from God. The marks of His mercy all around us are strong enough to inspire us with some general hope. The very fact that He still continues our life, and has not at once cast us into hell, shows that He is waiting awhile before the wrath comes upon us to the uttermost. Under these circumstances it is *natural* that the conscience-stricken sinner should look round him for some atonement with which to meet his God. And this in fact has been the usual course of religion in all ages. Whether "with burnt-offerings and calves of a year old, with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, with the offering of a man's first-born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul;" or, in a higher way, "by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God;"[1] by some means or other, repentant sinners have attempted to win God's attention and engage His favour. And this mode has, before now, been graciously accepted by God, though He generally chose the gift which He would accept. Thus Jacob was instructed to sacrifice on the altar at Bethel, after his return from Padan-aram. David, on the other hand, speaks of the more spiritual sacrifice in the fifty-first Psalm: "The

[1] Micah vi. 6–8.

sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Such are the services of the penitent, as suggested by nature, and approved by God Himself in the Old Testament.

But now, turning to the parable of the prodigal son, we find nothing of this kind in it. There is no mention made here of any offering on his part to his father, any propitiatory work. This should be well observed. The truth is, that our Saviour has shown us in all things a more perfect way than was ever before shown to man. As He promises us a more exalted holiness, an exacter self-command, a more generous self-denial, and a fuller knowledge of truth, so He gives us a more true and noble repentance. The most noble repentance (if a fallen being can be noble in his fall), the most decorous conduct in a conscious sinner, is an *unconditional surrender* of himself to God—not a bargaining about terms, not a scheming (so to call it) to be received back again, but an instant *surrender* of himself in the first instance. Without knowing what will become of him, whether God will spare or not, merely with so much hope in his heart as not utterly to despair of pardon, still not looking merely to *pardon* as an *end*, but rather looking to the claims of the Benefactor whom he has offended, and smitten with shame, and the sense of his ingratitude, he must *surrender himself* to his lawful Sovereign. He is a runaway offender; he must come back, as a very first step, before anything can be determined about him, bad or good; he is a rebel, and must lay down his arms. Self-devised offerings might do in a less serious matter; as an atonement for sin, they imply a defective view of

the evil and extent of sin in his own case. Such is that perfect way which nature shrinks from, but which our Lord enjoys in the parable—a surrender. The prodigal son waited not for his father to show signs of placability. He did not merely approach a space, and then stand as a coward, curiously inquiring, and dreading how his father felt towards him. He made up his mind at once to degradation at the best, perhaps to rejection. He arose and went straight on towards his father, with a collected mind; and though his relenting father saw him from a distance, and went out to meet him, still his purpose was that of an instant frank submission. Such must be Christian repentance: First we must put aside the idea of finding a remedy for our sin; then, though we feel the guilt of it, yet we must set out firmly towards God, not knowing for certain that we shall be forgiven. He, indeed, meets us on our way with the tokens of His favour, and so He bears up human faith, which else would sink under the apprehension of meeting the Most High God; still, for our repentance to be Christian, there must be in it that generous temper of self-surrender, the acknowledgment that we are unworthy to be called any more His sons, the abstinence from all ambitious hopes of sitting on His right hand or His left, and the willingness to bear the heavy yoke of bond-servants, if He should put it upon us.

This, I say, is Christian repentance. Will it be said, "It is too hard for a beginner?" true: but I have not been describing the case of a beginner. The parable teaches us what the character of the true penitent is, not how men actually *at first* come to God. The longer

we live, the more we may hope to *attain* this higher kind of repentance, viz., in proportion as we advance in the other graces of the perfect Christian character. The truest kind of repentance as little comes at first, as perfect conformity to any other part of God's Law. It is gained by long practice—it will come at length. The dying Christian will fulfil the part of the returning prodigal more exactly than he ever did in his former years. When first we turn to God in the actual history of our lives, our repentance is mixed with all kinds of imperfect views and feelings. Doubtless there is in it something of the true temper of simple submission; but the wish of appeasing God on the one hand, or a hard-hearted insensibility about our sins on the other, mere selfish dread of punishment, or the expectation of a sudden easy pardon, these, and such-like principles, influence us, whatever we may say or may think we feel. It is, indeed, easy enough to have good words put into our mouths, and our feelings roused, and to profess the union of utter self-abandonment and enlightened sense of sin; but to claim is not really to possess these excellent tempers. Really to gain these is a work of time. It is when the Christian has long fought the good fight of faith, and by experience knows how few and how imperfect are his best services; then it is that he is able to acquiesce, and most gladly acquiesces in the statement, that we are accepted by faith only in the merits of our Lord and Saviour. When he surveys his life at the close of it, what is there he can trust in? what act of it will stand the scrutiny of the Holy God? of course no part of it, so much is plain without saying

a word. But further, what part of it even is a sufficient evidence to himself of his own sincerity and faithfulness? This is the point which I urge. How shall he know that he is still in a state of grace after all his sins? Doubtless he may have some humble hope of his acceptance. St. Paul speaks of the testimony of his conscience as consoling him; but his conscience also tells him of numberless actual sins, and numberless omissions of duty; and with the awful prospect of eternity before him, and in the weakness of declining health, how shall he collect himself to appear before God? Thus he is, after all, in the very condition of the returning prodigal, and cannot go beyond him, though he has served God ever so long. He can but *surrender* himself to God, as after all, a worse than unprofitable servant, resigned to God's will, whatever it is, with more or less hope of pardon, as the case may be; doubting not that Christ is the sole meritorious Author of all grace, resting simply on Him who, "if He will, can make him clean," but not without fears about himself, because unable, as he well knows, to read his own heart in that clear unerring way in which God reads it. Under these circumstances, how vain it is to tell him of his own good deeds, and to bid him look back on his past consistent life! This reflection will rarely comfort him; and when it does, it will be the recollection of the instances of God's mercy towards him in former years which will be the chief ground of encouragement in it. No, his true stay is, that Christ came "to call sinners to repentance," that "He died for the ungodly." He acknowledges and adopts, as far as he can, St. Paul's

words, and nothing beyond them, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, of whom I am chief."[1]

Who shall dare approach Christ at the dreadful Day of Judgment, who has rejected the calling of His Spirit here? Who shall then dare to surrender himself to the great God, when hell is opened ready to receive him? Alas! it is only because *some* hope is left to us that we dare give ourselves up to Him *here; despair* ever keeps away. But then, when He takes His seat as the severe Judge of sinners, who, among His slothful disobedient servants, will willingly present himself? Surely the time of *submission* will then be over; resignation has no place among fallen spirits; they are swept away by the uncontrollable power of God. "Bind him *hand and foot*, and take him away;"[2] such will be the dreadful command. They *would* struggle if they *could*.

And in hell they will be still tormented by the worm of proud rebellious hatred of God! Not even ages will reconcile them to a hard endurance of their fate; not even the dry apathy in which unbelievers on earth take refuge, will be allowed them. There is no fatalism in the place of torment. The devils see their doom was their own fault, yet they are unable to be sorry for it. It is their *will* that is in direct energetic variance with the will of God, and they know it.

Consider this, my brethren, and lay it to heart. Doubtless you must render yourselves to God's mercy

[1] Matt. ix. 13; Rom. v. 6; 1 Tim. i. 15. [2] Matt. xxii. 13.

here, or else be forced away before His anger hereafter.

"To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts."[1]

[1] Heb. iii. 7–13.

110720

SERMON VIII.

CONTRACTED VIEWS IN RELIGION.

LUKE xv. 29.

"Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

THERE is a general correspondence between this parable, and that in St. Matthew's gospel of the two sons whom their father bade go work in his vineyard; but they differ as regards the character of the professedly obedient son: in St. Matthew he says, "I go, sir, and went not;" in the parable before us he is of a far different class of Christians, though not without his faults. There is nothing to show that he is insincere in his profession, though in the text he complains in a very unseemly and foolish way. He bears a considerable resemblance to the labourers in the vineyard, who complained of their master; though they are treated with greater severity. The elder brother of the prodigal complained of his father's kindness towards the penitent; the labourers of the vineyard murmured against the good-man of the house for receiving and rewarding those who came late to his service as

liberally as themselves. They, however, spoke in selfishness and presumption; but he in perplexity, as it would appear, and distress of mind. Accordingly, he was comforted by his father, who graciously informed him of the reason of his acting as he had done. "Son, *thou* art ever with me," he says, "and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

Now let us try to understand the feelings of the elder brother, and to apply the picture to the circumstances in which we find ourselves at present.

First, then, in the conduct of the father, there seemed, at first sight, an evident departure from the rules of fairness and justice. Here was a reprobate son received into his favour on the first stirrings of repentance. What was the use of serving him dutifully, if there were no difference in the end between the righteous and the wicked? This is what we feel and act upon in life constantly. In doing good to the poor, for instance, a chief object is to encourage industrious and provident habits; and it is evident we should hurt and disappoint the better sort, and defeat our object, if, after all, we did not take into account the difference of their conduct, though we promised to do so, but gave those who did not work nor save all the benefits granted to those who did. The elder brother's case, then, seemed a hard one; and that, even without supposing him to feel jealous, or to have unsuitable notions of his own importance and usefulness. Apply this to the case of religion, and it still holds good. At

first sight, the reception of the penitent sinner seems to interfere with the reward of the faithful servant of God. Just as the promise of pardon is abused by bad men to encourage themselves in sinning on, that grace may abound; so, on the other hand, it is misapprehended by the good, so as to dispirit them. For what is our great stay and consolation amid the perturbations of this world? The truth and justice of God. This is our one light in the midst of darkness. "He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity;" "just and right is He." Where else should we find rest for our foot all over the world? Consider in how mysterious a state all things are placed; the wicked are uppermost in power and name, and the righteous are subjected to bodily pain and mental suffering, as if they did not serve God. What a temptation is this to unbelief! The Psalmist felt it when he spoke of the prosperity of the wicked. "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."[1] It is to meet this difficulty that Almighty God has vouchsafed again and again to declare the unswerving rule of His government—favour to the obedient, punishment to the sinner; that there is "no respect of persons with Him;" that "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."[2] Recollect how often this is declared in the book of Psalms. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." "The righteous

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 12, 13. [2] Rom. ii. 11; Ezek. xviii. 20.

Lord loveth righteousness; His countenance doth behold the upright." "With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright. With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward. For Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks." "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good."[1] These declarations, and numberless others like them, are familiar to us all; and why, I say, so often made, except to give us that one fixed point for faith to rest upon, while all around us is changing and disappointing us? viz., that we are quite sure of peace in the end, bad as things may now look, if we do but follow the rule of conscience, avoid sin, and obey God. Hence, St. Paul tells us that "he that cometh to God, must believe that He is a *rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him."[2] Accordingly, when we witness the inequalities of the present world, we comfort ourselves by reflecting that they will be put right in another.

Now the restoration of sinners seems to interfere with this confidence; it seems, at first sight, to put bad and good on a level. And the feeling it excites in the mind is expressed in the parable by the words of the text: "These many years do I serve Thee, neither transgressed I at any time Thy commandment," yet I never have been welcomed and honoured with that peculiar joy which Thou showest towards the repentant

[1] Ps. i. 6; xi. 7; xviii. 25–27; xxxii. 10; cxxv. 4. [2] Heb. xi. 6.

sinner. This is the expression of an agitated mind, that fears lest it be cast back upon the wide world, to grope in the dark without a God to guide and encourage it in its course.

The condescending answer of the Father in the parable is most instructive. It sanctions the great truth, which seemed in jeopardy, that it is *not* the same thing in the end to obey or disobey, expressly telling us that the Christian penitent is not placed on a footing with those who have consistently served God from the first. "Son, *thou* art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine:" that is, why this sudden fear and distrust? can there be any misconception on thy part because I welcome thy brother? dost thou not yet understand Me? Surely thou hast known Me too long to suppose that *thou* canst lose by his gain. *Thou* art in My confidence. I do not make any outward display of kindness towards *thee*, for it is a thing to be taken for granted. We give praise and make professions to strangers, not to friends. Thou art My heir, all that I have is thine. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Who could have thought that it were needful to tell to thee truths which thou hast heard all thy life long? Thou art *ever* with Me; and canst thou really grudge that I should, by one mere *act* of rejoicing, show My satisfaction at the sinner's recovery, and should console him with a promise of mercy, who, before he heard of it, was sinking down under the dread of deserved punishment? "It was *meet* that we should make merry and be glad," thou as well as thy Father.—Such is our merciful God's answer to His suspicious servants, who

think He cannot pardon the sinner without withdrawing His favour from them; and it contains in it both a consolation for the perplexed believer not to distrust Him; and again, a warning to the disobedient, not to suppose that repentance makes all straight and even, and puts a man in the same place as if he had never departed from grace given.

But let us now notice the unworthy feeling which appears in the conduct of the elder brother. "He was angry, and would not go" into the house. How may this be fulfilled in our own case?

There exists a great deal of infirmity and foolishness even in the better sort of men. This is not to be wondered at, considering the original corrupt state of their nature, however it is to be deplored, repented of, and corrected. Good men are, like Elijah, "jealous for the Lord God of hosts," and rightly solicitous to see His tokens around them, the pledges of His unchangeable just government; but then they mix with such good feelings undue notions of self-importance, of which they are not aware. This seemingly was the state of mind which dictated the complaint of the elder brother.

This will especially happen in the case of those who are in the most favoured situations in the Church. All places possess their peculiar temptation. Quietness and peace, those greatest of blessings, constitute the trial of the Christians who enjoy them. To be cast on the world, and to see life (as it is called) is a vanity, and "drowns" the unstable "in destruction and perdition;" but while, on the one hand, a religious man may thrive

even in the world's pestilent air and on unwholesome food, so, on the other hand, he may become sickly, unless he guards against it, from the very abundance of privileges vouchsafed to him in a peaceful lot. The elder brother had always lived at home; he had seen things go on one way, and, as was natural and right, got attached to them in that one way. But then he could not conceive that they possibly could go on in any other way; he thought he understood his Father's ways and principles far more than he did, and when an occurrence took place, for which he had hitherto met with no precedent, he lost himself, as being suddenly thrust aside out of the contracted circle in which he had hitherto walked. He was disconcerted, and angry with his Father. And so in religion, we have need to watch against that narrowness of mind, to which we are tempted by the uniformity and tranquillity of God's providence towards us. We should be on our guard lest we suppose ourselves to have such a clear knowledge of God's ways, as to rely implicitly on our own notions and feelings. Men attach an undue importance to this or that point in received opinions or practices, and cannot understand how God's blessing can be given to modes of acting to which they themselves are unaccustomed. Thus the Jews thought religion would come to an end, if the Temple were destroyed, whereas, in fact, it has spread abroad and flourished more marvellously since than ever it did before. In this perplexity of mind the Church Catholic is our divinely intended guide, which keeps us from a narrow interpretation of Scripture, from local prejudices and excitements of the day; and

by its clear-sighted and consolatory teaching scatters those frightful self-formed visions which scare us.

But I have not described the extreme state of the infirmity into which the blessing of peace leads unwary Christians. They become not only over-confident of their knowledge of God's ways, but positive in their over-confidence. They do not like to be contradicted in their opinions, and are generally most attached to the very points which are most especially of their own devising. They forget that all men are at best but learners in the school of Divine Truth, and that they themselves ought to be *ever* learning, and that they may be sure of the truth of their creed, without a like assurance in the details of religious opinion. They find it a much more comfortable view, much more agreeable to the indolence of human nature, to give over seeking, and to believe they had nothing more to find. A right faith is ever eager and on the watch, with quick eyes and ears, for tokens of God's will, whether He speak in the way of nature or of grace. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."[1] This is that faith by which (as the Prophet continues) "the just shall live." The Psalmist also expresses this expectant temper. "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress."[2] But as for those who have long had God's favour without cloud or

[1] Heb. ii. 1. [2] Ps. cxxiii. 1, 2.

storm, so it is, they grow secure. They do not feel the great gift. They are apt to presume, and so to become irreverent. The elder brother was too familiar with his Father. Irreverence is the very opposite temper to faith. "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." This most gracious truth was the very cause of his murmuring. When Christians have but a little, they are thankful; they gladly pick up the crumbs from under the table. Give them much, they soon forget it is much; and when they find it is not all, and that for other men, too, even for penitents, God has some good in store, straightway they are offended. Without denying in words their own natural unworthiness, and still having real convictions of it to a certain point, nevertheless, somehow, they have a certain secret over-regard for themselves; at least they *act* as if they thought that the Christian privileges belonged to them over others, by a sort of fitness. And they like respect to be shown them by the world, and are jealous of anything which is likely to interfere with the continuance of their credit and authority. Perhaps, too, they have pledged themselves to certain received opinions, and this is an additional reason for their being suspicious of what to them is a novelty. Hence such persons are least fitted to deal with difficult times. God works wondrously in the world; and at certain eras His providence puts on a new aspect. Religion seems to be failing, when it is merely changing its form. God seems for an instant to desert His own appointed instruments, and to be putting honour upon such as have been framed in express disobedience to His commands. For

instance, sometimes He brings about good by means of wicked men, or seems to bless the efforts of those who have separated from His Holy Church more than those of His true labourers. Here is the trial of the Christian's faith, who, if the fact is so, must not resist it, lest haply he be found fighting against God, nor must he quarrel with it after the manner of the elder brother. But he must take everything as God's gift, hold fast his *principles*, not give *them* up because appearances are for the moment against them, but believe all things will come round at length. On the other hand, he must not cease to beg of God, and try to gain, the spirit of a sound mind, the power to separate truth from falsehood, and to try the spirits, the disposition to submit to God's teaching, and the wisdom to act as the varied course of affairs requires; in a word, a portion of that spirit which rested on the great Apostle, St. Paul.

I have thought it right to enlarge upon the conduct of the elder brother in the parable, because something of his character may perchance be found among ourselves. We have long had the inestimable blessings of peace and quiet. We are unworthy of the least of God's mercies, much more of the greatest. But with the blessing we have the trial. Let us then guard against abusing our happy lot, while we have it, or we may lose it for having abused it. Let us guard against discontent in any shape; and as we cannot help hearing what goes on in the world, let us guard, on hearing it, against all intemperate, uncharitable feelings towards those who differ from us, or oppose us. Let us pray for our enemies; let us try to make out men to be as good

as they can fairly and safely be considered; let us rejoice at any symptoms of repentance, or any marks of good principle in those who are on the side of error. Let us be forgiving. Let us try to be very humble, to understand our ignorance, and to rely constantly on the enlightening grace of our Great Teacher. Let us be "slow to speak, slow to wrath;"—not abandoning our principles, or shrinking from the avowal of them when seasonable, or going over to the cause of error, or fearing consequences, but acting ever from a sense of duty, not from passion, pride, jealousy, or an unbelieving dread of the future; feeling gently, even when we have reason to act severely. "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." What a gracious announcement, if we could realize it! and how consolatory, so far as we have reason to hope that we are following on to know God's will, and living in His faith and fear! What should alarm those who have Christ's power, or make them envious who have Christ's fulness? How ought we calmly to regard, and resolutely endure, the petty workings of an evil world, thinking seriously of nothing but of the souls that are perishing in it!

"I, even I, am He that comforteth you," says Almighty God: "who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor? I am the Lord thy God: and I have put My words in

thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people." [1]

[1] Isa. li. 12, 13, 15, 16.

SERMON IX.

A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE AS REVEALED IN THE GOSPEL.

GEN. xvi. 13.

"*Thou God seest me.*"

WHEN Hagar fled into the wilderness from the face of her mistress, she was visited by an Angel, who sent her back; but, together, with this implied reproof of her impatience, he gave her a word of promise to encourage and console her. In the mixture of humbling and cheerful thoughts thus wrought in her, she recognized the presence of her Maker and Lord, who ever comes to His servants in a two-fold aspect, severe because He is holy, yet soothing as abounding in mercy. In consequence, she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, "Thou God seest me."

Such was the condition of man before Christ came, favoured with some occasional notices of God's regard for individuals, but, for the most part, instructed merely in His general Providence, as seen in the course of human affairs. In this respect even the Law was deficient, though it abounded in proofs that God was

a living, all-seeing, all recompensing God. It was deficient, in comparison of the Gospel, in evidence of the really-existing relation between each soul of man and its Maker, independently of everything else in the world. Of Moses, indeed, it is said, that "the Lord spake unto him *face to face*, as a man speaketh unto his friend."[1] But this was an especial privilege vouchsafed to him only and some others, as to Hagar, who records it in the text, not to all the people. But, under the New Covenant, this distinct regard, vouchsafed by Almighty God to every one of us, is clearly revealed. It was foretold of the Christian Church; "*All* thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."[2] When the Eternal Son came on earth in our flesh, men saw their invisible Maker and Judge. He showed Himself no longer through the mere powers of nature, or the maze of human affairs, but in our own likeness to Him. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;"[3] that is, in a sensible form, as a really existing individual being. And, at the same time, He forthwith began to speak to *us* as individuals. He, on the one hand, addressed each of us on the other. Thus it was in some sense a revelation face to face.

This is the subject on which I propose now to make a few remarks. And first, let me observe, it is very difficult, in spite of the revelation made us in the Gospel, to master the idea of this particular providence

[1] Exod. xxxiii. 11. [2] Isa. liv. 13. [3] 2 Cor. iv. 6.

of God. If we allow ourselves to float down the current of the world, living as other men, gathering up our notions of religion here and there, as it may be, we have little or no true comprehension of a particular Providence. We conceive that Almighty God works on a large plan; but we cannot realize the wonderful truth that He sees and thinks of individuals. We cannot believe He is really present everywhere, that He is wherever we are, though unseen. For instance, we can understand, or think we understand, that He was present on Mount Sinai, or within the Jewish Temple, or that He clave the ground under Dathan and Abiram. But we do not in any sufficient sense believe that He is in like manner "about *our* path, and about *our* bed, and spieth out all *our* ways."[1] We cannot bring ourselves to get fast hold of the solemn fact, that He sees what is going on among ourselves at this moment; that this man falls and that man is exalted, at His silent, invisible appointment. We use, indeed, the prayers of the Church, and intercede, not only for all conditions of men, but for the King and the Nobility, and the Court of Parliament, and so on, down to individual sick people in our own parish; yet in spite of all this, we do not bring home to our minds the truth of His omniscience. We know He is in heaven, and forget that He is also on earth. This is the reason why the multitude of men are so profane. They use light words; they scoff at religion; they allow themselves to be lukewarm and indifferent; they take the part of wicked men; they push forward wicked measures; they defend injustice,

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 2.

or cruelty, or sacrilege, or infidelity; because they have no grasp of a truth, which nevertheless they have no intention to deny, that God sees them. There is, indeed, a self-will, and self-deceit, which would sin on even in God's visible presence. This was the sin of Balaam, who took part with the enemies of Israel for reward; and of Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of the Simeonites, on whom Phineas did judgment; and such the sin of Saul, of Judas, of Ananias and Sapphira. Alas! doubtless such is the sin of many a man now in England, unless human nature is other than it was aforetime; alas! such a sin is in a measure our own from time to time, as any one may know for certain who is used to self-examination. Yet, over and above this, certainly there is also a great deal of profane sinning from our *forgetting*, not comprehending that we are in God's presence; not comprehending, or (in other words) believing, that He sees and hears and notes down everything we do.

This, again, is often the state in which persons find themselves on falling into trouble. The world fails them, and they despair, because they do not realize to themselves the loving-kindness and the presence of God. They find no comfort in a truth which to them is not a substance but an opinion. Therefore it was that Hagar, when visited in the wilderness by the Angel, called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, "Thou God seest me!" It came as a new truth to her that, amid her trouble and her waywardness, the eye of God was upon her. The case is the same now. Men talk in a general way of the goodness of God, His benevo-

lence, compassion, and long-suffering; but they think of it as of a flood pouring itself out all through the world, as the light of the sun, not as the continually repeated action of an intelligent and living Mind, contemplating whom it visits and intending what it effects. Accordingly, when they come into trouble, they can but say, "It is all for the best—God is good," and the like; and this does but fall as cold comfort upon them, and does not lessen their sorrow, because they have not accustomed their minds to feel that He is a merciful God, regarding them individually, and not a mere universal Providence acting by general laws. And then, perhaps, all of a sudden the true notion breaks on them, as it did upon Hagar. Some especial Providence, amid their infliction, runs right into their heart, and brings it close home to them, in a way they never experienced before, that God sees them. And then, surprised at this, which is a something quite new to them, they go into the other extreme, in proportion to their former apathy, and are led to think that they are especial objects of God's love, more than all other men. Instead of taking what has happened to them as an evidence of His particular Providence over all, as revealed in Scripture, they still will not believe a jot or tittle more than they see; and, while discovering He loves them individually, they do not advance one step, on that account, to the general truth, that He loves other men individually also. Now, had they been all along in the practice of studying Scripture, they would have been saved from both errors—their first, which was blindness to a particular Providence altogether—their second, which was a narrow-minded

limiting of it to themselves, as if the world at large were rejected and reprobate; for Scripture represents this privilege as the portion of all men one by one.

I suppose it is scarcely necessary to prove to those who have allowed their minds to dwell on the Gospels, that the peculiar character of our Lord's goodness, as displayed therein, is its tenderness and its considerateness. These qualities are the very perfection of kindness between man and man; but, from the very extent and complication of the world's system, and from its Maker's being invisible, our imagination scarcely succeeds in attributing them to Him, even when our reason is convinced, and we wish to believe accordingly. His Providence manifests itself in general laws, it moves forward upon the lines of truth and justice; it has no respect of persons, rewarding the good and punishing the bad, not as individuals, but according to their character. How shall He who is Most Holy direct His love to this man or that for the sake of each, contemplating us one by one, without infringing on His own perfections? Or even were the Supreme Being a God of unmixed benevolence, how, even then, shall the thought of Him come home to our minds with that constraining power which the kindness of a human friend exerts over us? The greatest acknowledgment we can make of the kindness of a superior, is to say that he acts as if he were personally interested in us. The mass of benevolent men are kind and generous, because it is their way to be so, irrespectively of the person whom they benefit. Natural temper, a flow of spirits, or a turn of good fortune, opens the heart, which pours itself out

profusely on friend and enemy. They scatter benefits as they move along. Now, at first sight, it is difficult to see how our idea of Almighty God can be divested of these earthly notions, either that His goodness is imperfect, or that it is fated and necessary; and wonderful indeed, and adorable is the condescension by which He has met our infirmity. He has met and aided it in that same Dispensation by which He redeemed our souls. In order that we may understand that in spite of His mysterious perfections He has a separate knowledge and regard for individuals, He has taken upon Him the thoughts and feelings of our own nature, which we all understand *is* capable of such personal attachments. By becoming man, He has cut short the perplexities and the discussions of our reason on the subject, as if He would grant our objections for argument's sake, and supersede them by taking our own ground.

The most winning property of our Saviour's mercy (if it is right so to speak of it), is its dependence on time and place, person and circumstance; in other words, its tender discrimination. It regards and consults for each individual as he comes before it. It is called forth by some as it is not by others, it cannot (if I may say so) manifest itself to every object alike; it has its particular shade and mode of feeling for each; and on some men it so bestows itself, as if He depended for His own happiness on their well-being. This might be illustrated, as is often done, by our Lord's tender behaviour towards Lazarus and his sisters, or His tears over Jerusalem; or by His conduct towards St. Peter,

before and after his denial of Him, or towards St. Thomas when he doubted, or by His love of His mother, or of St. John. But I will direct your attention rather to His treatment of the traitor Judas; both because it is not so commonly referred to, and, also, because if there was a being in the whole world whom one might suppose to be cast out of His presence as hateful and reprobate, it was he who He foresaw would betray Him. Yet we shall find that even this wretched man was followed and encompassed by His serene though grave regard till the very hour he betrayed Him.

Judas was in darkness and hated the light, and "went to his own place;" yet he found it, not by the mere force of certain natural principles working out their inevitable results—by some unfeeling fate, which sentences the wicked to hell—but by a Judge who surveys him from head to foot, who searches him through and through, to see if there is any ray of hope, any latent spark of faith; who pleads with him again and again, and, at length abandoning him, mourns over him the while with the wounded affection of a friend rather than the severity of the Judge of the whole earth. For instance, first a startling warning a year before his trial. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Then, when the time was come, the lowest act of abasement towards one who was soon to betray Him, and to suffer the unquenchable fire. "He riseth from supper, and . . . . poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet,"[1] and Judas in the number. Then a second

[1] John vi. 70; xiii. 4, 5.

warning at the same time, or rather a sorrowful lament spoken as if to Himself, "Ye are not all clean." Then openly, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said it." Lastly, when He was actually betrayed by him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" "Judas" (He addresses him by name), "betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"[1] I am not attempting to reconcile His divine foreknowledge with this special and prolonged anxiety, this personal feeling towards Judas; but wish you only to dwell upon the latter, in order to observe what is given us by the revelation of Almighty God in the Gospels, viz., an acquaintance with His providential regard for *individuals*, making His sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good. And, in like manner doubtless, at the last day, the wicked and impenitent shall be condemned, not in a mass, but one by one—one by one, appearing each in his own turn before the righteous Judge, standing under the full glory of His countenance, carefully weighed in the balance and found wanting, dealt with, not indeed with a weak and wavering purpose, where God's justice claims satisfaction, yet, at the same time, with all the circumstantial solicitude and awful care of one who would fain make, if He could, the fruit of His passion more numerous than it is.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 24, 25, 50; Luke xxii. 48.

This solemn reflection may be further enforced by considering our Lord's behaviour towards strangers who came to Him. Judas was His friend; but *we* have never seen Him. How will He look, and how does He look upon us? Let His manner in the Gospels towards the multitude of men assure us. All-holy, Almighty as He is, and has shown Himself to be, yet in the midst of His Divine Majesty, He could display a tender interest in all who approached Him; as if He could not cast His eyes on any of His creatures without the overflowing affection of a parent for his child, regarding it with a full satisfaction, and simply desiring its happiness and highest good. Thus, when the rich young man came to him, it is said, "And Jesus beholding him, *loved him*, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest." When the Pharisees asked a sign, "He sighed deeply in His Spirit." At another time, "He looked round about on them"—as if on every one, to see if here or there perchance there might be an exception to the general unbelief, and to condemn, one by one, those who were guilty[1]—"He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Again, when a leper came to Him, He did not simply heal him, but, "moved with compassion, He put forth His hand."[2]

How gracious is this revelation of God's particular providence to those who seek Him! how gracious to those who have discovered that this world is but vanity, and who are solitary and isolated in themselves, what-

[1] Mark x. 21; viii. 12; iii. 5.

[2] Vide also Matt. xix. 26; Luke xxii. 61; Mark iii. 34; i. 41.

ever shadows of power and happiness surround them! The multitude, indeed, go on without these thoughts, either from insensibility, as not understanding their own wants, or changing from one idol to another, as each successively fails. But men of keener hearts would be overpowered by despondency, and would even loathe existence, did they suppose themselves under the mere operation of fixed laws, powerless to excite the pity or the attention of Him who has appointed them. What should they do especially, who are cast among persons unable to enter into their feelings, and thus strangers to them, though by long custom ever so much friends! or who have perplexities of mind they cannot explain to themselves, much less remove, and no one to help them; or who have affections and aspirations pent up within them, because they have not met with objects to which to devote them; or who are misunderstood by those around them, and find they have no words to set themselves right with them, or no principles in common by way of appeal; or who seem to themselves to be without place or purpose in the world, or to be in the way of others; or who have to follow their own sense of duty without advisers or supporters, nay, to resist the wishes and solicitations of superiors or relatives; or who have the burden of some painful secret, or of some incommunicable solitary grief! In all such cases the Gospel narrative supplies our very need, not simply presenting to us an unchangeable Creator to rely upon, but a compassionate Guardian, a discriminating Judge and Helper.

God beholds thee individually, whoever thou art.

He "calls thee by thy name." He sees thee, and understands thee, as He made thee. He knows what is in thee, all thy own peculiar feelings and thoughts, thy dispositions and likings, thy strength and thy weakness. He views thee in thy day of rejoicing, and thy day of sorrow. He sympathizes in thy hopes and thy temptations. He interests Himself in all thy anxieties and remembrances, all the risings and fallings of thy spirit. He has numbered the very hairs of thy head and the cubits of thy stature. He compasses thee round and bears thee in His arms; He takes thee up and sets thee down. He notes thy very countenance, whether smiling or in tears, whether healthful or sickly. He looks tenderly upon thy hands and thy feet; He hears thy voice, the beating of thy heart, and thy very breathing. Thou dost not love thyself better than He loves thee. Thou canst not shrink from pain more than He dislikes thy bearing it; and if He puts it on thee, it is as thou wilt put it on thyself, if thou art wise, for a greater good afterwards. Thou art not only His creature (though for the very sparrows He has a care, and pitied the "much cattle" of Nineveh), thou art man redeemed and sanctified, His adopted son, favoured with a portion of that glory and blessedness which flows from Him everlastingly unto the Only-begotten. Thou art chosen to be His, even above thy fellows who dwell in the East and South. Thou wast one of those for whom Christ offered up His last prayer, and sealed it with His precious blood. What a thought is this, a thought almost too great for our faith! Scarce can we refrain from acting Sarah's

part, when we bring it before us, so as to "laugh" from amazement and perplexity. What is man, what are we, what am I, that the Son of God should be so mindful of me? What am I, that He should have raised me from almost a devil's nature to that of an Angel's? that He should have changed my soul's original constitution, new-made me, who from my youth up have been a transgressor, and should Himself dwell personally in this very heart of mine, making me His temple? What am I, that God the Holy Ghost should enter into me, and draw up my thoughts heavenward "with plaints unutterable?"

These are the meditations which come upon the Christian to console him, while he is with Christ upon the holy mount. And, when he descends to his daily duties, they are still his inward strength, though he is not allowed to tell the vision to those around him. They make his countenance to shine, make him cheerful, collected, serene, and firm in the midst of all temptation, persecution, or bereavement. And with such thoughts before us, how base and miserable does the world appear in all its pursuits and doctrines! How truly miserable does it seem to seek good from the creature; to covet station, wealth, or credit; to choose for ourselves, in fancy, this or that mode of life; to affect the manners and fashions of the great; to spend our time in follies; to be discontented, quarrelsome, jealous or envious, censorious or resentful; fond of unprofitable talk, and eager for the news of the day; busy about public matters which concern us not; hot in the cause of this or that interest or party; or set upon gain; or devoted to the

increase of barren knowledge! And at the end of our days, when flesh and heart fail, what will be our consolation, though we have made ourselves rich, or have served an office, or been the first man among our equals, or have depressed a rival, or managed things our own way, or have settled splendidly, or have been intimate with the great, or have fared sumptuously, or have gained a name! Say, even if we obtain that which lasts longest, a place in history, yet, after all, what ashes shall we have eaten for bread! And, in that awful hour, when death is in sight, will He, whose eye is now so loving towards us, and whose hand falls on us so gently, will He acknowledge us any more? or, if He still speaks, will His voice have any power to stir us? rather will it not repel us, as it did Judas, by the very tenderness with which it would invite us to Him?

Let us then endeavour, by His grace, rightly to understand where we stand, and what He is towards us; most tender and pitiful, yet, for all His pity, not passing by the breadth of a single hair the eternal lines of truth, holiness, and justice; He who can condemn to the woe everlasting, though He weeps and laments beforehand, and who, when once the sentence of condemnation has gone forth, will wipe out altogether the remembrance of us, "and know us not." The tares were "bound in bundles" for the burning, indiscriminately, promiscuously, contemptuously. "Let us then fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it."

SERMON X.

TEARS OF CHRIST AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 34–36.

"Jesus said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved Him!"

ON first reading these words the question naturally arises in the mind—*why* did our Lord weep at the grave of Lazarus? He knew He had power to raise him, why should He act the part of those who sorrow for the dead? In attempting any answer to this inquiry, we should ever remember that the thoughts of our Saviour's mind are far beyond our comprehension. Hardly do we enter into the feelings and meaning of men like ourselves, who are gifted with any special talent; even human philosophers or poets are obscure from the depth of their conceptions. What then must be the marvellous abyss of love and understanding in Him who, though partaker of our nature, is the Son of God?

This, indeed, is evident, as a matter of fact, on the face of the Scripture record, as any one may see who will take the trouble to inspect it. It is not, for

instance, the text alone which raises a question; but the whole narrative, in which it occurs, exhibits our Saviour's conduct in various lights, which it is difficult for weak creatures, such as we are, properly to blend together.

When He first received the news of Lazarus's illness, "He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Then telling His disciples that Lazarus was dead, He said He was "glad for their sake that He was not there;" and said that He would "go and awaken him out of sleep." Then, when He was come to Bethany, where Lazarus dwelt, He was so moved by the sorrow of the Jews, that "He groaned in the spirit and was troubled." Lastly, in spite of His perturbation and weeping, presently He raised Lazarus.

I say, it is remarkable that such difficulties as these should lie on the face of Scripture, quite independently of those arising from the comparison of the texts in question with the doctrine of His divine nature. We know, indeed, there are insuperable mysteries involved in the union of His divine with His human attributes, which seem incompatible with each other; for instance, how He should be ever-blessed, and yet weep—all-knowing, yet apparently ignorant; but, without entering into the consideration of the mysteries of faith, commonly so called, it is worth inquiring whether the very surface of the sacred history does not contain seeming inconsistencies, of a nature to prepare us for such other difficulties as may lie from a deeper comparison of history with doctrine.

As another instance of the discrepancy I speak of,

consider our Saviour's words according to the received versions, "Sleep on now, and take your rest;" and immediately after, "Rise, let us be going."[1]

So again, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one;" then follows, "Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said, It is enough;" lastly, when Peter used his sword, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."[2]

I am not saying that we cannot possibly remove any part of the seeming opposition between such passages, but only that on the whole there is quite enough in the narrative to show that He who speaks is not one whose thoughts it is easy to get possession of; that it is no light matter to put one's-self, even in part, into the position of His mind, and to state under what feelings and motives He said this or that; in a word, I wish to impress upon you, that our Saviour's words are not of a nature to be heard once and no more, but that to understand them we must feed upon them, and live in them, as if by little and little growing into their meaning.

It would be well if we understood the necessity of this more than we do. It is very much the fashion at present to regard the Saviour of the world in an irreverent and unreal way—as a mere idea or vision; to speak of Him so narrowly and unfruitfully, as if we only knew of His name; though Scripture has set Him before us in His actual sojourn on earth, in His gestures, words, and deeds, in order that we may have that on

[1] Matt. xxvi. 45, 46. [2] Luke xxii. 36, 38; Matt. xxvi. 52.

which to fix our eyes. And till we learn to do this, to leave off vague statements about His love, His willingness to receive the sinner, His imparting repentance and spiritual aid, and the like, and view Him in His particular and actual works, set before us in Scripture, surely we have not derived from the Gospels that very benefit which they are intended to convey. Nay, we are in some danger, perhaps, even as regards our faith; for, it is to be feared, while the thought of Christ is but a creation of our minds, it may gradually be changed or fade away, it may become defective or perverted; whereas, when we contemplate Christ as manifested in the Gospels, the Christ who exists therein, external to our own imaginings, and who is as really a living being, and sojourned on earth as truly as any of us, then we shall at length believe in Him with a conviction, a confidence, and an entireness, which can no more be annihilated than the belief in our senses. It is impossible for a Christian mind to meditate on the Gospels, without feeling, beyond all manner of doubt, that He who is the subject of them is God; but it is very possible to speak in a vague way of His love towards us, and to use the name of Christ, yet not at all to realize that He is the Living Son of the Father, or to have any anchor for our faith within us, so as to be fortified against the risk of future defection.

I will say a few words then under this impression, and with the reverent thoughts before me with which I began, by way of comment on our Saviour's weeping at Lazarus's grave; or, rather, I will suggest what each of you may, please God, improve for himself.

What led our Lord to weep over the dead, who could at a word restore him, nay, had it in purpose so to do?

1. First of all, as the context informs us, He wept from very sympathy with the grief of others. "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." It is the very nature of compassion or sympathy, as the word implies, to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." We know it is so with men; and God tells us He also is compassionate, and full of tender mercy. Yet we do not well know what this means, for how can God rejoice or grieve? By the very perfection of His nature Almighty God cannot show sympathy, at least to the comprehension of beings of such limited minds as ours. He, indeed, is hid from us; but if we were allowed to see Him, how could we discern in the Eternal and Unchangeable signs of sympathy? Words and works of sympathy He does display to us; but it is the very sight of sympathy in another that affects and comforts the sufferer more even than the fruits of it. Now we cannot see God's sympathy; and the Son of God, though feeling for us as great compassion as His Father, did not show it to us while He remained in His Father's bosom. But when He took flesh and appeared on earth, He showed us the Godhead in a new manifestation. He invested Himself with a new set of attributes, those of our flesh, taking into Him a human soul and body, in order that thoughts, feelings, affections might be His, which could respond to ours and certify to us His tender mercy. When,

then, our Saviour weeps from sympathy at Mary's tears, let us not say it is the love of a man overcome by natural feeling. It is the love of God, the bowels of compassion of the Almighty and Eternal, condescending to show it as we are capable of receiving it, in the form of human nature.

Jesus wept, therefore, not merely from the deep thoughts of His understanding, but from spontaneous tenderness; from the gentleness and mercy, the encompassing loving-kindness and exuberant fostering affection of the Son of God for His own work, the race of man. Their tears touched Him at once, as their miseries had brought Him down from heaven. His ear was open to them, and the sound of weeping went at once to His heart.

2. But next, we may suppose (if it is allowable to conjecture), that His pity, thus spontaneously excited, was led forward to dwell on the various circumstances in man's condition which excite pity. It was awakened, and began to look around upon the miseries of the world. What was it He saw? He saw visibly displayed the *victory of death;* a mourning multitude—everything present which might waken sorrow except him who was the chief object of it. He was not—a stone marked the place where he lay. Martha and Mary, whom He had known and loved in their brother's company, now solitary, approached Him, first one and then the other, in far other mood and circumstance than heretofore—in deep affliction! in faith indeed and resignation, yet, apparently, with somewhat of a tender complaint: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother

had not died." Such has been the judgment passed, or the doubt raised, concerning Him, in the breast of the creature in every age. Men have seen sin and misery around them, and, whether in faith or unbelief, have said, "If Thou hadst been here," if Thou hadst interfered, it might have been otherwise. Here, then, was the Creator surrounded by the works of His hands, who adored Him indeed, yet seemed to ask why He suffered what He Himself had made so to be marred. Here was the Creator of the world at a scene of death, seeing the issue of His gracious handiwork. Would not He revert in thought to the hour of creation, when He went forth from the bosom of the Father to bring all things into existence? There had been a day when He had looked upon the work of His love, and seen that it was "very good." Whence had the good been turned to evil, the fine gold become dim? "An enemy had done this." Why it was allowed, and how achieved, was a secret with Him; a secret from all who were about Him, as it is a secret to us at this day. Here He had incommunicable thoughts with His Eternal Father. He would not tell them why it was; He chose another course for taking away their doubts and complaints. "He opened not His mouth," but He wrought wondrously. What He has done for all believers, revealing His atoning death yet not explaining it, this He did for Martha and Mary also, proceeding to the grave in silence, to raise their brother, while they complained that he had been allowed to die.

Here then, I say, were abundant sources for His grief (if we may be permitted to trace them), in the

contrast between Adam, in the day in which he was created, innocent and immortal, and man as the devil had made him, full of the poison of sin and the breath of the grave; and again, in the timid complaint of His sorrowing friends that that change had been permitted. And though He was about to turn back the scene of sorrow into joy again, yet, after all, Lazarus one day must die again—He was but delaying the fulfilment of His own decree. A stone lay upon him now; and, though he was raised from the grave, yet, by His own inscrutable law, one day he must lie down again in it. It was a respite, not a resurrection.

3. Here I have suggested another thought which admits of being dwelt upon. Christ was come to do a deed of mercy, and it was a secret in His own breast. All the love which He felt for Lazarus was a secret from others. He was conscious to Himself He loved him; but none could tell but He how earnest that affection was. Peter, when his love for Christ was doubted, found a relief in an appeal to Himself: "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee."[1] But Christ had no earthly friend who could be His confidant in this matter; and, as His thoughts turned on Lazarus, and His heart yearned towards him, was He not in Joseph's case, who not in grief, but from the very fulness of his soul, and his desolateness in a heathen land, when his brethren stood before him, "sought where to weep," as if his own tears were his best companions, and had in them a sympathy to soothe that pain which none could share? Was He not in the

[1] John xxi. 17.

case of a parent hanging over an infant, and weeping upon it, from the very thought of its helplessness and insensibility to the love poured out upon it? But the parent weeps from the feeling of her weakness to defend it; knowing that what is now a child must grow up and take its own course, and (whether for earthly or heavenly good) must depend, not on her, but on the Creator and on itself. Christ's was a different contemplation; yet attended with its own peculiar emotion. I mean the feeling that He *had* power to raise up Lazarus. Joseph wept, as having a secret, not only of the past, but of the future;—of good in store as well as of evil done—of good which it was in his own power to confer. And our Lord and Saviour knew that, while all seemed so dreary and hopeless, in spite of the tears and laments of his friends, in spite of the corpse four days old, of the grave and the stone which was upon it, He had a spell which could overcome death, and He was about to use it. Is there any time more affecting than when you are about to break good news to a friend who has been stricken down by tidings of ill?

4. Alas! there were other thoughts still to call forth His tears. This marvellous benefit to the forlorn sisters, how was it to be attained? at His own cost. Joseph knew he could bring joy to his brethren, but at no sacrifice of his own. Christ was bringing life to the dead by His own death. His disciples would have dissuaded Him from going into Judea, *lest* the Jews should kill Him. Their apprehension was fulfilled. He went to raise Lazarus, and the fame of that miracle was the immediate cause of His seizure and crucifixion. This

He knew beforehand, He saw the prospect before Him; He saw Lazarus raised; the supper in Martha's house; Lazarus sitting at table; joy on all sides of Him; Mary honouring her Lord on this festive occasion by the outpouring of the very costly ointment upon His feet; the Jews crowding not only to see Him, but Lazarus also; His triumphant entry into Jerusalem; the multitude shouting Hosanna; the people testifying to the raising of Lazarus; the Greeks, who had come up to worship at the feast, earnest to see Him; the children joining in the general joy; and then the Pharisees plotting against Him, Judas betraying Him, His friends deserting Him, and the cross receiving Him. These things doubtless, among a multitude of thoughts unspeakable, passed over His mind. He felt that Lazarus was wakening to life at His own sacrifice; that He was descending into the grave which Lazarus left. He felt that Lazarus was to live and He to die; the appearance of things was to be reversed; the feast was to be kept in Martha's house, but the last passover of sorrow remained for Him. And He knew that this reverse was altogether voluntary with Him. He had come down from His Father's bosom to be an Atonement of blood for all sin, and thereby to raise all believers from the grave, as He was then about to raise Lazarus; and to raise them, not for a time, but for eternity; and now the sharp trial lay before Him, through which He was to "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Contemplating then the fulness of His purpose while now going about a single act of mercy, He said to Martha, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die."

Let us take to ourselves these comfortable thoughts, both in the contemplation of our own death, or upon the death of our friends. Wherever faith in Christ is, there is Christ Himself. He said to Martha, "Believest thou this?" Wherever there is a heart to answer, "Lord, I believe," there Christ is present. There our Lord vouchsafes to stand, though unseen—whether over the bed of death or over the grave; whether we ourselves are sinking or those who are dear to us. Blessed be His name! nothing can rob us of this consolation: we will be as certain, through His grace, that He is standing over us in love, as though we saw Him. We will not, after our experience of Lazarus's history, doubt an instant that He is thoughtful about us. He knows the beginnings of our illness, though He keeps at a distance. He knows when to remain away and when to draw near. He notes down the advances of it, and the stages. He tells truly when His friend Lazarus is sick and when he sleeps. We all have experience of this in the narrative before us, and henceforth, so be it! will never complain at the course of His providence. Only, we will beg of Him an increase of faith;—a more lively perception of the curse under which the world lies, and of our own personal demerits, a more understanding view of the mystery of His Cross, a more devout and implicit reliance on the virtue of it, and a more confident persuasion that He will never put upon us more than we can bear, never afflict His brethren with any woe except for their own highest benefit.

SERMON XI.

BODILY SUFFERING.

COLOSSIANS i. 24.

"I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church."

OUR Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came by blood as well as by water, not only as a Fount of grace and truth—the source of spiritual light, joy, and salvation—but as a combatant with Sin and Satan, who was "consecrated through suffering." He was, as prophecy had marked Him out, "red in His apparel, and His garments like Him that treadeth in the wine-fat;" or, in the words of the Apostle, "He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood." It was the untold sufferings of the Eternal Word in our nature, His body dislocated and torn, His blood poured out, His soul violently separated by a painful death, which has put away from us the wrath of Him whose love sent Him for that very purpose. This only was our Atonement; no one shared in the work. He "trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with Him." When lifted up upon the cursed tree, He fought with all the hosts of evil, and conquered by suffering.

Thus, in a most mysterious way, all that is needful for this sinful world, the life of our souls, the regeneration of our nature, all that is most joyful and glorious, hope, light, peace, spiritual freedom, holy influences, religious knowledge and strength, all flow from a fount of blood. A work of blood is our salvation; and we, as we would be saved, must draw near and gaze upon it in faith, and accept it as the way to heaven. We must take Him, who thus suffered, as our guide; we must embrace His sacred feet, and follow Him. No wonder, then, should we receive on ourselves some drops of the sacred agony which bedewed His garments; no wonder, should we be sprinkled with the sorrows which He bore in expiation of our sins!

And so it has ever been in very deed; to approach Him has been, from the first, to be partaker, more or less, in His sufferings; I do not say in the case of every individual who believes in Him, but as regards the more conspicuous, the more favoured, His choice instruments, and His most active servants; that is, it has been the lot of the Church, on the whole, and of those, on the whole, who had been most like Him, as Rulers, Intercessors, and Teachers of the Church. He, indeed, alone meritoriously; they, because they have been near Him. Thus, immediately upon His birth, He brought the sword upon the infants of His own age at Bethlehem. His very shadow, cast upon a city, where He did not abide, was stained with blood. His Blessed Mother had not clasped Him to her breast for many weeks, ere she was warned of the penalty of that fearful privilege: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul

also."[1] Virtue went out of Him; but the water and the blood flowed together as afterwards from His pierced side. From among the infants He took up in His arms to bless, is said to have gone forth a chief martyr of the generation after Him. Most of His Apostles passed through life-long sufferings to a violent death. In particular, when the favoured brothers, James and John, came to Him with a request that they might sit beside Him in His kingdom, He plainly stated this connection between nearness to Him and affliction. "Are ye able," He said, "to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"[2] As if He said, "Ye cannot have the sacraments of grace without the painful figures of them. The Cross, when imprinted on your foreheads, will draw blood. You shall receive, indeed, the baptism of the Spirit, and the cup of My communion, but it shall be with the attendant pledges of My cup of agony, and My baptism of blood." Elsewhere He speaks the same language to all who would partake the benefits of His death and passion: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."[3]

Accordingly, His Apostles frequently remind us of this necessary, though mysterious appointment, and bid us "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as though some strange thing happened unto us, but to rejoice in having communion with the sufferings of Christ."[4] St. Paul teaches us the same lesson in the text, in which he speaks of taking up the

[1] Luke ii. 35.
[2] Matt. xx. 22.
[3] Luke xiv. 27.
[4] 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13.

remnant of Christ's sorrows, as some precious mantle dropt from the Cross, and wearing it for His sake. "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what remains of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, that is, the Church."[1] And though he is speaking especially of persecution and other sufferings borne in the cause of the Gospel, yet it is our great privilege, as Scripture tells us, that all pain and trouble, borne in faith and patience, will be accounted as marks of Christ, grace-tokens from the absent Saviour, and will be accepted and rewarded for His sake at the last day. It declares generally, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[2]

Thus the Gospel, which has shed light in so many ways upon the state of this world, has aided especially our view of the *sufferings* to which human nature is subjected; turning a punishment into a privilege, in the case of all pain, and especially of bodily pain, which is the most mysterious of all. Sorrow, anxiety, and disappointment are more or less connected with sin and sinners; but bodily pain is involuntary for the most part, stretching over the world by some external irresistible law, reaching to children who have never actually sinned, and to the brute animals, who are strangers to Adam's nature, while in its manifestations it is far more

[1] Vide also 2 Cor iv. 10. [2] Isa. xliii. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

piteous and distressing than any other suffering. It is the lot of all of us, sooner or later; and that, perhaps in a measure which it would be appalling and wrong to anticipate, whether from disease, or from the casualties of life. And all of us at length must die; and death is generally ushered in by disease, and ends in that separation of soul and body, which itself may, in some cases, involve peculiar pain.

Worldly men put such thoughts aside as gloomy; they can neither deny nor avert the prospect before them; and they are wise, on their own principles, not to embitter the present by anticipating it. But Christians may bear to look at it without undue apprehension; for this very infliction, which most touches the heart and imagination, has (as I have said) been invested by Almighty God with a a new and comfortable light, as being the medium of His choicest mercies towards us. Pain is no longer a curse, a necessary evil to be undergone with a dry submission or passive endurance —it may be considered even as a blessing of the Gospel, and being a blessing, admits of being met well or ill. In the way of nature, indeed, it seems to shut out the notion of duty, as if so masterful a discipline from without superseded the necessity or opportunity of self-mastery; but now that "Christ hath suffered in the flesh," we are bound "to arm ourselves with the same mind," and to obey, as He did, amid suffering.

In what follows, I shall remark briefly, first, on the natural effect of pain upon the mind; and next, upon the remedies and correctives of that effect which the knowledge of the Gospel supplies.

1. Now, as to its effect upon the mind, let it be well understood that it has no sanctifying influence in itself. Bad men are made worse by it. This should be borne in mind, lest we deceive ourselves; for sometimes we speak (at least the poor often so speak) as though present hardship and suffering were in some sense a ground of confidence in themselves as to our future prospects, whether as expiating our sins or bringing our hearts nearer to God. Nay, even the more religious among us may be misled to think that pain makes them better than it really does; for the effect of it at length, on any but very proud or ungovernable tempers, is to cause a languor and composure of mind, which looks like resignation, while it necessarily throws our reason upon the especial *thought* of God, our only stay in such times of trial. Doubtless it does really benefit the Christian, and in no scanty measure; and he may thank God who thus blesses it; only let him be cautious of *measuring* his spiritual state by the particular exercise of faith and love in his heart at the time, especially if that exercise be limited to the affections themselves, and have no opportunity of showing itself in works. St. Paul speaks of chastisement "yielding *afterwards* the peaceable fruit of righteousness,"[1] formed indeed and ripened at the moment, but manifested in due season. This may be the real fruit of the suffering of a death-bed, even though it may not have time to show itself to others before the Christian departs hence. Surely we may humbly hope that it perfects habits hitherto but partially formed, and blends the several graces of the

[1] Heb. xii. 11.

Spirit more entirely. Such is the issue of it in *established* Christians;—but it *may* possibly effect nothing so blessed. Nay, in the case of those who have followed Christ with but a half heart, it may be a trial too strong for their feebleness, and may overpower them. This is a dreadful reflection for those who put off the day of repentance. Well does our Church pray for us: "Suffer us not, at our last hour, for any pains of death to fall from Thee!" As for unbelievers, we know how it affects them, from such serious passages of Scripture as the following: "They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."[1]

Nay, I would go so far as to say, not only that pain does not commonly improve us, but that without care it has a strong tendency to do do our souls harm, viz., by making us selfish; an effect produced, even when it does us good in other ways. Weak health, for instance, instead of opening the heart, often makes a man supremely careful of his bodily ease and well-being. Men find an excuse in their infirmities for some extraordinary attention to their comforts; they consider they may fairly consult, on all occasions, their own convenience rather than that of another. They indulge their wayward wishes, allow themselves in indolence when they really might exert themselves, and think they may be fretful because they are weak. They become querulous, self-willed, fastidious, and egotistical. Bystanders, indeed, should be very cautious of thinking

[1] Rev. xvi. 10, 11.

any particular sufferer to be thus minded, because, after all, sick people have a multitude of feelings which they cannot explain to any one else, and are often in the right in those matters in which they appear to others most fanciful or unreasonable. Yet this does not interfere with the correctness of my remark on the whole.

Take another instance under very different circumstances. If bodily suffering can be presented under distinct aspects, it is in the lassitude of a sick-bed and in the hardships of the soldier's life. Yet of the latter we find selfishness almost a proverbial characteristic. Surely the life of soldiers on service is a very school of generosity and self-neglect, if rightly understood, and is used as such by the noble and high-principled; yet here, a low and carnal mind, instead of profiting by its advantages, will yield to the temptation of referring everything that befalls it to its own comfort and profit. To secure its own interests, will become enshrined within it as its main duty, and with the greater plausibility, inasmuch as there is a sense in which it may really be so accounted. Others (it will suggest) must take care of themselves; it is a folly and weakness to think of them; there are but few chances of safety; the many must suffer, some unto death; it is wisdom to struggle for life and comfort, and to dismiss the thought of others. Alas! instances occur, every now and then, in the experience of life, which show that such thoughts and feelings are not peculiar to any one class of men, but are the actuating principles of the multitude. If an alarm of danger be given amid a

crowd, the general eagerness for safety leads men to act towards each other with utter unconcern, if not with frantic cruelty. There are stories told of companies of men finding themselves at sea with scanty provisions, and of the shocking deeds which followed, when each was struggling to preserve his own life.

The natural effect, then, of pain and fear, is to individualize us in our own minds, to fix our thoughts on ourselves, to make us selfish. It is through pain, chiefly, that we realize to ourselves even our bodily organs; a frame entirely without painful sensations is (as it were) one whole without parts, and prefigures that future spiritual body which shall be the portion of the Saints. And to this we most approximate in our youth, when we are not sensible that we are compacted of gross terrestrial matter, as advancing years convince us. The young reflect little upon themselves; they gaze around them, and live out of doors, and say they have souls, little understanding their words. "They rejoice in their youth." This, then, is the effect of suffering, that it arrests us: that it puts, as it were, a finger upon us to ascertain for us our own individuality. But it does no more than this; if such a warning does not lead us through the stirrings of our conscience heavenwards, it does but imprison us in ourselves and make us selfish.

2. Here, then, it is that the Gospel finds us; heirs to a visitation, which, sooner or later, comes upon us, turning our thoughts from outward objects, and so tempting us to idolize self, to the dishonour of that God whom we ought to worship, and the neglect of man

whom we should love as ourselves. Thus it finds us, and it obviates this danger, not by removing pain, but by giving it new associations. Pain, which by nature leads us only to ourselves, carries on the Christian mind from the thought of self to the contemplation of Christ, His passion, His merits, and His pattern; and, thence, further to that united company of sufferers who follow Him and "are what He is in this world." He is the great Object of our faith; and, while we gaze upon Him, we learn to forget ourselves.

Surely that is not the most fearful and hateful of evils, here below, however trying to the flesh, which Christ underwent voluntarily. No one chooses evil for its own sake, but for the greater good wrought out through it. He underwent it as for ends greater than the immediate removal of it, "not grudgingly or of necessity," but cheerfully doing God's will, as the Gospel history sets before us. When His time was come, we are told, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." His disciples said, "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" but He persisted. Again, He said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." He proceeded to the garden beyond Cedron, though Judas knew the place; and when the band of officers came to seize Him, "He went forth, and said unto them, I am He."[1] And with what calmness and majesty did He bear His sufferings, when they came upon Him, though by His agony in the garden He showed He fully felt their keenness! The Psalmist, in his prediction of them, says, "I am poured out like

[1] Luke ix. 51; John xi. 8; xiii. 27; xviii. 2, 4, 5.

water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted;"[1] describing, as it would seem, that sinking of spirit and enfeebling of nerve which severe pain causes. Yet, in the midst of distress which seemed to preclude the opportunity of obedience, He was "about His Father's business," even more diligently than when in His childhood He asked questions of the doctors in the Temple; not thinking to be merely passive under the trial, but accounting it as if a great occasion for a noble and severe surrender of Himself to His Father's will. Thus He "learned obedience by the things that He suffered." Consider the deep and serene compassion which led Him to pray for those who crucified Him; His solicitous care of His Mother; and His pardoning words addressed to the robber who suffered with Him. And so, when He said, "It is finished," He showed that He was still contemplating, with a clear intellect, "the travail of His soul, and was satisfied;" and in the solemn surrender of Himself into His Father's hand, He showed where His mind rested in the midst of its darkness. Even when He seemed to be thinking of Himself, and said, "I thirst," He really was regarding the words of prophecy, and was bent on vindicating, to the very letter, the divine announcements concerning Him. Thus, upon the Cross itself, we discern in Him the mercy of a Messenger from heaven, the love and grace of a Saviour, the dutifulness of a Son, the faith of a created nature, and the zeal of a servant of God. His mind was stayed upon His Father's sovereign will and infinite perfections, yet could pass, with-

[1] Ps. xxii. 14.

out effort, to the claim of filial duty, or the need of an individual sinner. Six out of His seven last words were words of faith and love. For one instant a horrible dread overwhelmed Him, when He seemed to ask why God had forsaken Him. Doubtless "that voice was for our sakes;" as when He made mention of His thirst; and, like the other, was taken from inspired prophecy. Perhaps it was intended to set before us an example of a special trial to which human nature is subject, whatever was the real and inscrutable manner of it in Him, who was all along supported by an inherent Divinity; I mean the trial of sharp agony, hurrying the mind on to vague terrors and strange inexplicable thoughts; and is, therefore, graciously recorded for our benefit, in the history of His death, "who was tempted, in all points, like as we are, yet without sin."[1]

Such, then, were our Lord's sufferings, voluntarily undergone, and ennobled by an active obedience; themselves the centre of our hopes and worship, yet borne without thought of self, towards God and for man. And who, among us, habitually dwells upon them, but is led, without deliberate purpose, by the very warmth of gratitude and adoring love, to attempt bearing his own inferior trials in the same heavenly mind? Who does not see that to bear pain well is to meet it courageously, not to shrink or waver, but to pray for God's help, then to look at it steadfastly, to summon what nerve we have of mind and body, to receive its attack, and to bear up against it (while strength is given us) as against some visible enemy in close combat? Who will not acknow-

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

ledge that, when sent to us, we must make its presence (as it were) our own voluntary act, by the cheerful and ready concurrence of our own will with the will of God? Nay, who is there but must own that with Christ's sufferings before us, pain and tribulation are, after all, not only the most blessed, but even the most congruous attendants upon those who are called to inherit the benefit of them? Most congruous, I say, not as though necessary, but as most natural and befitting, harmonizing, most fully, with the main Object in the group of sacred wonders on which the Church is called to gaze. Who, on the other hand, does not at least perceive that all the glare and gaudiness of this world, its excitements, its keenly-pursued goods, its successes and its transports, its pomps and its luxuries, are not in character with that pale and solemn scene which faith must ever have in its eye? What Christian will not own that to "reign as kings," and to be "full," is not his calling; so as to derive comfort in the hour of sickness, or bereavement, or other affliction, from the thought that he is now in his own place, if he be Christ's, in his true home, the sepulchre in which his Lord was laid? So deeply have His Saints felt this, that when times were peaceful, and the Church was in safety, they could not rest in the lap of ease, and have secured to themselves hardnesses, lest the world should corrupt them. They could not bear to see the much-enduring Paul adding to his necessary tribulations a self-inflicted chastisement of the flesh, and yet allow themselves to live delicately, and fare sumptuously every day. They saw the image of Christ reflected in tears and blood, in the glorious company of

the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, and the noble army of Martyrs; they read in prophecy of the doom of the Church, as "a woman fed by God in the wilderness,"[1] and her witnesses as "clothed in sackcloth;" and they could not believe that they were meant for nothing more than to enjoy the pleasures of this life, however innocent and moderate might be their use of them. Without deciding about their neighbours, they felt themselves called to higher things; their own sense of the duty became the sanction and witness of it. They considered that God, at least, would afflict them in His love, if they spared themselves ever so much. The thorn in the flesh, the buffetings of Satan, the bereavement of their eyes, these were their portion; and, in common prudence, were there no higher thought, they could not live out of time and measure with these expected visitations. With no superstitious alarms, or cowardly imaginations, or senseless hurrying into difficulty or trial, but calmly and in faith, they surrendered themselves into His hands, who had told them in His inspired word that affliction was to be their familiar food; till at length they gained such distaste for the luxuries of life as to be impatient of them from their very fulness of grace.

Even in these days, when the "fine gold has become dim," such has been the mind of those we most revere.[2] But such was it especially in primitive times.

[1] Vide Rev. xii. 6; xi. 3.

[2] "It is a most miserable state for a man to have everything according to his desire, and quietly to enjoy the pleasures of life. There needs no more to expose him to eternal misery."—*Bishop Wilson—Sacra Privata. Wednesday.*

It was the temper, too, of those Apostles who were removed, more than their brethren, from the world's buffetings; as if the prospect of suffering afterwards were no ground of dispensation for a present self-inflicted discipline, but rather demanded it. St. James the Less was Bishop of Jerusalem, and was highly venerated for his uprightness by the unbelieving Jews among whom he lived unmolested. We are told that he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat any animal food, nor indulge in the luxury of the bath. "So often was he in the Temple on his knees, that they were thin and hard by his continual supplication."[1] Thus he kept his "loins girded about, and his lamp burning," for the blessed martyrdom which was to end his course. Could it be otherwise? How could the great Apostle, sitting at home by his Lord's decree, "nourish his heart," as he calls it, "as for the slaughter?" How could he eat, and drink, and live as other men, when "the Ark, and Israel, and Judah were in tents," encamped in the open fields, and one by one, God's chosen warriors were falling before the brief triumph of Satan! How could he be "delicate on the earth, and wanton," when Paul and Barnabas, Peter, too, and John were in stripes and prisons, in labours and perils, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness! Stephen had led the army of Martyrs in Jerusalem itself, which was his own post of service. James, the brother of John, had followed him in the same city; he first of the Apostles tasting our Lord's cup, who had unwittingly asked to drink it. And if this was the

[1] Euseb. Hist., ii. 23.

feeling of the Apostles, when in temporary safety, why is it not ours, who altogether live at ease, except that we have not faith enough to realize what is past? Could we see the Cross upon Calvary, and the list of sufferers who resisted unto blood in the times that followed it, is it possible that we should feel surprise when pain overtook us, or impatience at its continuance? Is it strange though we are smitten by ever so new a plague? Is it grievous that the Cross presses on one nerve or limb ever so many years till hope of relief is gone? Is it, indeed, not possible with the Apostle to rejoice in "bearing in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus?" And much more, can we, for very shame's sake, suffer ourselves to be troubled at what is but ordinary pain, to be irritated or saddened, made gloomy or anxious by inconveniences which never could surprise or unsettle those who had studied and understood their place as servants of a crucified Lord?

Let us, then, determine with cheerful hearts to sacrifice unto the Lord our God our comforts and pleasures, however innocent, when He calls for them, whether for the purposes of His Church, or in His own inscrutable Providence. Let us lend to Him a few short hours of present ease, and we shall receive our own with abundant usury in the day of His coming. There is a Treasury in heaven stored with such offerings as the natural man abhors; with sighs and tears, wounds and blood, torture and death. The Martyrs first began the contribution, and we all may follow them; all of us, for every suffering, great or little, may, like the widow's mite, be sacrificed in faith to Him who sent it. Christ

gave us the words of consecration, when He for an ensample said, "Thy will be done." Henceforth, as the Apostle speaks, we may "glory in tribulation," as the seed of future glory.

Meanwhile, let us never forget in all we suffer, that, properly speaking, our own sin is the cause of it, and it is only by Christ's mercy that we are allowed to range ourselves at His side. We who are children of wrath, are made through Him children of grace; and our pains —which are in themselves but foretastes of hell—are changed by the sprinkling of His blood into a preparation for heaven.

SERMON XII.

THE HUMILIATION OF THE ETERNAL SON.

HEBREWS v. 7, 8.

"*Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.*"

THE chief mystery of our holy faith is the humiliation of the Son of God to temptation and suffering, as described in this passage of Scripture. In truth, it is a more overwhelming mystery even than that which is involved in the doctrine of the Trinity. I say, more overwhelming, not greater—for we cannot measure the more and the less in subjects utterly incomprehensible and divine; but with more in it to perplex and subdue our minds. When the mystery of the Trinity is set before us, we see indeed that it is quite beyond our reason; but, at the same time, it is no wonder that human language should be unable to convey, and human intellect to receive, truths relating to the incommunicable and infinite essence of Almighty God. But the mystery of the Incarnation relates, in part, to subjects more level with our reason; it lies not only

in the manner how God and man is one Christ, but in the very fact that so it is. We think we know of God so much as this, that He is altogether separate from imperfection and infirmity; yet we are told that the Eternal Son has taken into Himself a creature's nature, which henceforth became as much one with Him, as much belonged to Him, as the divine attributes and powers which He had ever had. The mystery lies as much in what we think we know, as in what we do not know. Reflect, for instance, upon the language of the text. The Son of God, who "had glory with the Father" from everlasting, was found, at a certain time, in human flesh, offering up prayers and supplications to Him, crying out and weeping, and exercising obedience in suffering! Do not suppose, from my thus speaking, that I would put the doctrine before you as a hard saying, as a stumbling-block, and a yoke of bondage, to which you must perforce submit, however unwillingly. Far be it from us to take such unthankful account of a dispensation which has brought us salvation! Those who in the Cross of Christ see the Atonement for sin, cannot choose but glory in it; and its mysteriousness does but make them glory in it the more. They boast of it before men and Angels, before an unbelieving world, and before fallen spirits; with no confusion of face, but with a reverent boldness they confess this miracle of grace, and cherish it in their creed, though it gains them but the contempt and derision of the proud and ungodly.

And as the doctrine of our Lord's humiliation is most mysterious, so the very surface of the narrative in which

it is contained is mysterious also, as exciting wonder, and impressing upon us our real ignorance of the nature, manner, and causes of it. Take, for instance, His temptation. Why was it undergone at all, seeing our redemption is ascribed to His death, not to it? Why was it so long? What took place during it? What was Satan's particular object in tempting Him? How came Satan to have such power over Him as to be able to transport Him from place to place? and what was the precise result of the temptation? These and many other questions admit of no satisfactory solution. There is something remarkable too in the period of it, being the same as that of the long fasts of Moses and Elijah, and of His own abode on earth after His resurrection. A like mystery again is cast around that last period of His earthly mission. Then He was engaged we know not how, except that He appeared, from time to time, to His Apostles; of the forty days of His temptation we know still less, only that "He did eat nothing," and "was with the wild beasts."[1]

Again, there is something of mystery in the connection of His temptation with the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him on His baptism. After the voice from heaven had proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," "*immediately*," as St. Mark says, "the Spirit *driveth* Him into the wilderness." As if there were some connection, beyond our understanding, between His baptism and temptation, the first act of the Holy Spirit is forthwith to "drive Him" (whatever is meant by the word) into the wilder-

[1] Luke iv. 2; Mark i. 13.

ness. Observe, too, that it was almost from this solemn recognition, "This is My beloved Son," that the Devil took up the temptation, "*If* Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread;"[1] yet what his thoughts and designs were we cannot even conjecture. All we see is a renewal, apparently, of Adam's temptation, in the person of the "second Man."

In like manner, questions might be asked concerning His descent into hell, which could as little be solved, with our present limited knowledge of the nature and means of His gracious Economy.

I bring together these various questions in order to impress upon you our depth of ignorance on the entire subject under review. The Dispensation of mercy is revealed to us in its great and blessed result, our redemption, and in one or two other momentous points. Upon all these we ought to dwell and enlarge, mindfully and thankfully, but with the constant recollection that after all, as regards the Dispensation itself, only one or two partial notices are revealed to us altogether of a great Divine Work. Enlarge upon them we ought, even because they are few and partial, not slighting what is given us, because it is not all (like the servant who buried his lord's talent), but giving it what increase we can. And as there is much danger of the narrow spirit of that slothful servant at the present day, in which is strangely combined a profession of knowing everything, with an assertion that there is nothing to know concerning the Incarnation, I propose now, by

[1] Matt. iv. 3.

God's blessing, to set before you the Scripture doctrine concerning it, as the Church Catholic has ever received it; trading with the talent committed to us, so that when our Lord comes He may receive His own with usury.

Bearing in mind, then, that we know nothing truly about the manner or the ultimate ends of the humiliation of the Eternal Son, our Lord and Saviour, let us consider what that humiliation itself was.

The text says, "though He were a Son." Now, in these words, "the Son of God," much more is implied than at first sight may appear. Many a man gathers up, here and there, some fragments of religious knowledge. He hears one thing said in Church, he sees another thing in the Prayer-book; and among religious people, or in the world, he gains something more. In this way he gets possession of sacred words and statements, knowing very little about them really. He interprets them, as it may happen, according to the various and inconsistent opinions which he has met with, or he puts his own meaning upon them, that is, the meaning, as must needs be, of an untaught, not to say a carnal and irreverent mind. How can a man expect he shall discern and apprehend the real meaning and language of Scripture, if he has never approached it as a learner, and waited on the Divine Author of it for the gift of wisdom? By continual meditation on the sacred text, by diligent use of the Church's instruction, he will come to understand what the Gospel doctrines are; but, most surely, if all the knowledge he has be gathered from a sentence caught up here, and an argu-

ment heard there, even when he is most orthodox in word, he has but a collection of phrases, on which he puts, not the right meaning, but his own meaning. And the least reflection must show you what a very poor and unworthy meaning, or rather how false a meaning "the natural man" will put upon "the things of the Spirit of God." I have been led to say this from having used the words, "The Son of God," which, I much fear, convey, to a great many minds, little or no idea, little or nothing of a high, religious, solemn idea. We have, perhaps, a vague general notion that they mean something extraordinary and supernatural; but we know that we ourselves are called, in one sense, sons of God in Scripture. Moreover we have heard, perhaps (and even though we do not recollect it, yet may retain the impression of it), that the Angels are sons of God. In consequence, we collect just thus much from the title as applied to our Lord, that He came from God, that He was the well-beloved of God, and that He is much more than a mere man. This is all that the words convey to many men at the most; while many more refer them merely to His human nature. How different is the state of those who have been duly initiated into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! How different was the mind of the primitive Christians, who so eagerly and vigorously apprehended the gracious announcement, that in this title, "The Son of God," they saw and enjoyed the full glories of the Gospel doctrine! When times grew cold and unbelieving, then indeed, as at this day, public explanations were necessary of those simple and sacred words; but the first Christians

needed none. They felt that in saying that Christ was the Son of God, they were witnessing to a thousand marvellous and salutary truths, which they could not indeed understand, but by which they might gain life, and for which they could dare to die.

What, then, is meant by the "Son of God?" It is meant that our Lord is the very or true Son of God, that is, His Son by nature. We are but *called* the sons of God—we are adopted to be sons—but our Lord and Saviour is the Son of God, really and by birth, and He alone is such. Hence Scripture calls Him the Only-begotten Son. "Such knowledge is too excellent for" us; yet, however high it be, we learn as from His own mouth that God is not solitary, if we may dare so to speak, but that in His own incomprehensible essence, in the perfection of His one indivisible and eternal nature, His Dearly-beloved Son has ever existed with Him, who is called the Word, and, being His Son, is partaker in all the fulness of His Godhead. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Thus when the early Christians used the title, "The Son of God," they meant, after the manner of the Apostles when they use it in Scripture, all we mean in the Creed, when, by way of explaining ourselves, we confess Him to be "God from God, Light from Light, Very or True God from True God." For in that He is the Son of God, He must be whatever God is, all-holy, all-wise, all-powerful, all-good, eternal, infinite; yet since there is only one God, He must be at the same time not separate from God, but ever one with and in Him, one indivisibly; so that

it would be as idle language to speak of Him as separated in essence from His Father, as to say that our reason, or intellect, or will, was separate from our minds —as rash and profane language to deny to the Father His Only-begotten Word, in whom He has ever delighted, as to deny His Wisdom or Goodness, or Power, which also have been in and with Him from everlasting.

The text goes on to say: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Obedience belongs to a servant, but accordance, concurrence, co-operation, are the characteristics of a Son. In His eternal union with God there was no distinction of will and work between Him and His Father; as the Father's life was the Son's life, and the Father's glory the Son's also, so the Son was the very Word and Wisdom of the Father, His Power and Co-equal Minister in all things, the same and not the same as He Himself. But in the days of His flesh, when He had humbled Himself to "the form of a servant," taking on Himself a separate will and a separate work, and the toil and sufferings incident to a creature, then what had been mere concurrence became obedience. This, then, is the force of the words, "Though He was a Son, yet had He experience of *obedience*." He took on Him a lower nature, and wrought in it towards a Will higher and more perfect than it. Further, "He learned obedience amid *suffering*," and, therefore, amid temptation. His mysterious agony under it is described in the former part of the text; which declares that "in the days of His flesh," He "offered up prayers and supplications

with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Or, in the words of the foregoing chapter, He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

I am only concerned here in setting before you the sacred truth itself, not how it was, or why, or with what results. Let us, then, reverently consider what is implied in it. "The Word was made flesh;" by which is meant, not that He selected some particular existing man and dwelt in him (which in no sense would answer to the force of those words, and which He condescends to do continually in the case of all His elect, through His Spirit), but that He became what He was not before, that He took into His own Infinite Essence man's nature itself in all its completeness, creating a soul and body, and, at the moment of creation, making them His own, so that they never were other than His, never existed by themselves or except as in Him, being properties or attributes of Him (to use defective words) as really as His divine goodness, or His eternal Sonship, or His perfect likeness to the Father. And, while thus adding a new nature to Himself, He did not in any respect cease to be what He was before. How was that possible? All the while He was on earth, when He was conceived, when He was born, when He was tempted, on the cross, in the grave, and now at God's right hand —all the time through, He was the Eternal and Unchangeable Word, the Son of God. The flesh which He had assumed was but the instrument through which He acted for and towards us. As He acts in creation by His wisdom and power, towards Angels by His love,

towards devils by His wrath, so He has acted for our redemption through our own nature, which in His great mercy He attached to His own Person, as if an attribute, simply, absolutely, indissolubly. Thus St. Paul speaks—as in other places, of the love of God, and the holiness of God—so in one place expressly of "the blood of God," if I may venture to use such words out of the sacred context. "Feed the Church of God," he says to the elders of Ephesus, "which He hath purchased with *His own blood.*"[1] Accordingly, whatever our Lord said or did upon earth was strictly and literally the word and deed of God Himself. Just as we speak of seeing our friends, though we do not see their souls but merely their bodies, so the Apostles, Disciples, Priests, and Pharisees, and the multitude, all who saw Christ in the flesh, saw, as the whole earth will see at the last day, the Very and Eternal Son of God.

After this manner, then, must be understood His suffering, temptation, and obedience, not as if He ceased to be what He had ever been, but, having clothed Himself with a created essence, He made it the instrument of His humiliation; He acted in it, He obeyed and suffered through it. Do not we see among men, circumstances of a peculiar kind throw one of our own race out of himself, so that he, the same man, acts as if his usual self were not in being, and he had fresh feelings and faculties, for the occasion, higher or lower than before? Far be it from our thoughts to parallel the incarnation of the Eternal Word with such an accidental change! but I mention it, not to explain a Mystery

[1] Acts xx. 28.

(which I relinquished the thought of from the first), but to facilitate your *conception* of Him who is the subject of it, to help you towards contemplating Him as God and man at once, as still the Son of God though He had assumed a nature short of His original perfection. That Eternal Mind, which, till then, had thought and acted as God, began to think and act as a man, with all man's faculties, affections, and imperfections, sin excepted. Before He came on earth He was infinitely above joy and grief, fear and anger, pain and heaviness; but afterwards all these properties and many more were His as fully as they are ours. Before He came on earth, He had but the perfections of God, but afterwards He had also the virtues of a creature, such as faith, meekness, self-denial. Before He came on earth He could not be tempted of evil; but afterwards He had a man's heart, a man's tears, and a man's wants and infirmities. His Divine Nature indeed pervaded His manhood, so that every deed and word of His in the flesh savoured of eternity and infinity; but, on the other hand, from the time He was born of the Virgin Mary, he had a natural fear of danger, a natural shrinking from pain, though ever subject to the ruling influence of that Holy and Eternal Essence which was in Him. For instance, we read on one occasion of His praying that the cup might pass from Him; and, at another, when Peter showed surprise at the prospect of His crucifixion, He rebuked him sharply, as if for tempting Him to murmur and disobey.

Thus He possessed at once a double assemblage of attributes, divine and human. Still he was all-powerful,

though in the form of a servant; still He was all-knowing, though seemingly ignorant; still incapable of temptation, though exposed to it; and if any one stumble at this, as not a mere mystery, but in the very form of language a contradiction of terms, I would have him reflect on those peculiarities of human nature itself, which I just now hinted at. Let him consider the condition of his own mind, and see how like a contradiction it is. Let him reflect upon the faculty of memory, and try to determine whether he does or does not know a thing which he cannot recollect, or rather, whether it may not be said of him, that one self-same person, that in one sense he knows it, in another he does not know it. This may serve to appease his imagination, if it startles at the mystery. Or let him consider the state of an infant, which seems, indeed, to be without a soul for many months, which seems to have only the senses and functions of animal life, yet has, we know, a soul, which may even be regenerated. What, indeed, can be more mysterious than the Baptism of an infant? How strange is it, yet how transporting a sight, what a source of meditation is opened on us, while we look upon what seems so helpless, so reasonless, and know that at that moment it has a soul so fully formed, as on the one hand, indeed, to be a child of wrath; and, on the other (blessed be God), to be capable of a new birth through the Spirit! Who can say, if we had eyes to see, in what state that infant soul is? Who can say it has not its energies of reason and of will in some unknown sphere, quite consistently with the reality of its insensibility to the external world?

Who can say that all of us, or at least all who are living in the faith of Christ, have not some strange but unconscious life in God's presence all the while we are here, seeing what we do not know we see, impressed yet without power of reflection, and this, without having a double self in consequence, and with an increase to us, not a diminution, of the practical reality of our earthly sojourn and probation? Are there not men before now who, like Elisha, when his spirit followed Gehazi, or St. Peter, when he announced the coming of Sapphira's bearers, or St. Paul, when his presence went before him to Corinth,[1] seem to range beyond themselves, even while in the flesh? Who knows where he is "in visions of the night?" And this being so, how can we pronounce it to be any contradiction that, while the Word of God was upon earth, in our flesh, compassed within and without with human virtues and feelings, with faith and patience, fear and joy, grief, misgivings, infirmities, temptations, still He was, according to His Divine Nature, as from the first, passing in thought from one end of heaven even to the other, reading all hearts, foreseeing all events, and receiving all worship as in the bosom of the Father? This, indeed, is what He suggests to us Himself in those surprising words addressed to Nicodemus, which might even be taken to imply that even His human nature was at that very time in heaven while He spoke to him. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, *which is in heaven.*"[2]

To conclude, if any one is tempted to consider such

[1] 2 Kings v. 26; Acts v. 9; 1 Cor. iv. 19; v. 3. [2] John iii. 13.

subjects as the foregoing, abstract, speculative, and unprofitable, I would observe, in answer, that I have taken it on the very ground of its being, as I believe, especially practical. Let it not be thought a strange thing to say, though I say it, that there is much in the religious belief, even of the more serious part of the community at present, to make observant men very anxious where it will end. It would be no very difficult matter, I suspect, to perplex the faith of a great many persons who believe themselves to be orthodox, and, indeed, are so, according to their light. They have been accustomed to call Christ God, but that is all; they have not considered what is meant by applying that title to One who was really a man, and from the vague way in which they use it, they would be in no small danger, if assailed by a subtle disputant, of being robbed of the sacred truth in its substance, even if they kept it in name. In truth, until we contemplate our Lord and Saviour, God and man, as a really existing being, external to our minds, as complete and entire in His personality as we appear to be to each other, as one and the same in all His various and contrary attributes, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," we are using words which profit not. Till then we do not realize that Object of faith, which is not a mere name on which titles and properties may be affixed without congruity and meaning, but has a personal existence and an identity distinct from everything else. In what true sense do we "know" Him, if our idea of Him be not such as to take up and incorporate into itself the manifold attributes and offices which we ascribe to Him? What do we gain from

words, however correct and abundant, if they end with themselves, instead of lighting up the image of the Incarnate Son in our hearts? Yet this charge may too surely be brought against the theology of late centuries, which, under the pretence of guarding against presumption, denies us what is revealed; like Ahaz, refusing to ask for a sign, lest it should tempt the Lord.

Influenced by it, we have well-nigh forgotten the sacred truth, graciously disclosed for our support, that Christ is the Son of God in His Divine nature, as well as His human; we have well-nigh ceased to regard Him, after the pattern of the Nicene Creed, as "God from God, and Light from Light," ever one with Him, yet ever distinct from Him. We speak of Him in a vague way as God, which is true, but not the whole truth; and, in consequence when we proceed to consider His humiliation, we are unable to carry on the notion of His personality from heaven to earth. He who was but now spoken of as God, without mention of the Father from whom He is, is next described as a creature; but how do these distinct notions of Him hold together in our minds? We are able to continue the idea of a Son into that of a servant, though the descent was infinite, and, to our reason, incomprehensible; but when we merely speak first of God, then of man, we seem to change the Nature without preserving the Person. In truth, His Divine Sonship is that portion of the sacred doctrine on which the mind is providentially intended to rest throughout, and so to preserve for itself His identity unbroken. But when we abandon this gracious help afforded to our faith, how can we hope to gain the one true and simple

vision of Him? how shall we possibly look beyond our own words, or apprehend, in any sort, what we say? In consequence we are too often led, as a matter of necessity, in discoursing of His words and works, to distinguish between the Christ who lived on earth and the Son of God Most High, speaking of His human nature and His Divine nature so separately as not to feel or understand that God is man and man is God. I am speaking of those of us who have learned to reflect, reason, and dispute, to inquire and pursue their thoughts, not of the incurious or illiterate, who are not exposed to the temptation in question; and of the former I fear I must say (to use the language of ancient theology), that they begin by being Sabellians, that they go on to be Nestorians, and that they tend to be Ebionites and to deny Christ's Divinity altogether. Meanwhile, the religious world little thinks whither its opinions are leading; and will not discover that it is adoring a mere abstract name or a vague creation of the mind for the Ever-living Son, till the defection of its members from the faith startle it, and teach it that the so-called religion of the heart, without orthodoxy of doctrine, is but the warmth of a corpse, real for a time, but sure to fail.

How long will that complicated Error last under which our Church now labours? How long are human traditions of modern date to obscure, in so many ways, the majestic interpretations of Holy Writ which the Church Catholic has inherited from the age of the Apostles? When shall we be content to enjoy the wisdom and the pureness which Christ has bequeathed to His Church as a perpetual gift, instead of attempting

to draw our Creed, each for himself, as he best may, from the deep wells of truth? Surely in vain have we escaped from the superstitions of the middle ages, if the corruptions of a rash and self-trusting philosophy spread over our faith!

May God, even the Father, give us a heart and understanding to realize, as well as to confess that doctrine into which we were baptized, that His Only-begotten Son, our Lord, was conceived by the Holy Ghost, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, and was buried, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, from whence He shall come again, at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead!

SERMON XIII.

JEWISH ZEAL, A PATTERN TO CHRISTIANS.

JUDGES V. 31.

"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years."

WHAT a contrast do these words present to the history which goes before them! "It came to pass," says the sacred writer, "when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer . . . . Neither did Zebulon drive out the inhabitants of Kitron. . . . . Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho. . . . . Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Bethshemesh."[1] What was the consequence? "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served Baalim . . . . they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about.

[1] Judges i. 28-32.

. . . . Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; and they were greatly distressed."[1] Here is the picture of indolence and unfaithfulness leading to cowardice, to apostasy, and to national ruin.

On the other hand, consider, by way of contrast, the narrative contained in the chapter which ends with the text. Ephraim and Benjamin, Machir and Zebulon, Issachar and Naphtali, rousing, uniting, assailing their enemies, and conquering; conquering in the strength of the Lord. Their long captivity was as nothing, through God's great mercy, when they turned to Him. In vain had their enemies trod them down to the ground; the Church of God had that power and grace within it, that whenever it could be persuaded to shake off its lassitude and rally, it smote as sharply and as effectively as though it had never been bound with the green withs and the new ropes of the Philistines. So it was now. "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Such was the inspired cry of war: and it was obeyed. In consequence the Canaanites were discomfited in battle and fled; "and the land had rest forty years." Here is a picture of manly obedience to God's will—a short trial of trouble and suffering—and then the reward, *peace.*

I propose now to make some remarks upon the lesson conveyed to us in this picture, which extends indeed through the greater part of the Old Testament

[1] Judges ii. 11–15.

—the lesson to us *as individuals;* for surely it is with reference to our own duties *as individuals,* that we should read every part of Scripture.

What the Old Testament especially teaches us is this:—that zeal is as essentially a duty of all God's rational creatures, as prayer and praise, faith and submission; and, surely, if so, especially of sinners whom He has redeemed; that zeal consists in a strict attention to His commands—a scrupulousness, vigilance, heartiness, and punctuality, which bears with no reasoning or questioning about them—an intense thirst for the advancement of His glory—a shrinking from the pollution of sin and sinners — an indignation, nay impatience, at witnessing His honour insulted—a quickness of feeling when His name is mentioned, and a jealousy how it is mentioned—a fulness of purpose, an heroic determination to yield Him service at whatever sacrifice of personal feeling—an energetic resolve to push through all difficulties, were they as mountains, when His eye or hand but gives the sign—a carelessness of obloquy, or reproach, or persecution, a forgetfulness of friend and relative, nay, a hatred (so to say) of all that is naturally dear to us, when He says, "Follow me." These are some of the characteristics of zeal. Such was the temper of Moses, Phinehas, Samuel, David, Elijah; it is the temper enjoined on all the Israelites, especially in their conduct towards the abandoned nations of Canaan. The text expresses that temper in the words of Deborah: "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Now, it has sometimes been said that the commands of strenuous and stern service given to the Israelites—for instance, those relative to their taking and keeping possession of the promised land—do not apply to us Christians. There can be no doubt it is not our duty to take the sword and kill the enemies of God as the Jews were told to do; "Put up again thy sword into his place,"[1] are our Saviour's words to St. Peter. So far, then, if this is what is meant by saying that these commands do not apply to us, so far, doubtless, it is clear they do not apply to us. But it does not, hence, follow that the temper of mind which they pre-suppose and foster is not required of us; else, surely, the Jewish history is no longer profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. St. Peter was blamed, not for his zeal, but for his use of the sword.

Man's duty, perfection, happiness, have always been one and the same. He is not a different being now from what he ever was; he has always been commanded the same duties. What was the holiness of an Israelite is still the holiness of a Christian, though the Christian has far higher privileges and aids for perfection. The Saints of God have ever lived by faith, and walked in the way of justice, mercy, truth, self-mastery, and love. It is impossible, then, that all these duties imposed on the Israelites of driving out their enemies, and taking and keeping possession of the promised land, should not in some sense or other apply to us; for it is clear they were not in their case mere accidents

[1] Matt. xxvi. 52.

of obedience, but went to form a certain inward character, and as clear is it that our heart must be as the heart of Moses or David, if we would be saved through Christ.

This is quite evident, if we attentively examine the Jewish history, and the Divine commands which are the principles of it. For these commands, which some persons have said do not apply to us, are so many and varied, and repeated at so many and diverse times, that they certainly must have formed a peculiar character in the heart of the obedient Israelite, and were much more than an outward form and a sort of ceremonial service. They are so abundant throughout the Old Testament, that unless they in some way apply to us, it is difficult to see what is its direct use, at this day, in the way of precept; and this is the very conclusion which these same persons often go on to draw. They are willing to rid themselves of the Old Testament, and they say that Christians are not concerned in it, and that the Jews were almost barbarians; whereas St. Paul tells us, that the Jewish history is "written for our admonition and our learning."[1]

Let us consider some of the commands I have referred to, and the terms in which they are conveyed. For instance, that for the extirpation of the devoted nations from the land of Canaan. "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, ... thou shalt smite" the nations that possess it, "and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them;

[1] 1 Cor. x. 11; Rom. xv. 4.

neither shalt thou make marriages with them. . . . . Ye shall destroy their altars and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn down their graven images with fire. . . . . Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them."[1]

Next observe, this merciless temper, as profane people would call it, but as well-instructed Christians say, this godly zeal, was enjoined upon them under far more distressing circumstances, viz., the transgressions of their own relations and friends. "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, ... Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him. But thou shalt surely kill him. Thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people."[2] Now, doubtless, we at this day are not to put men to death for idolatry; but, doubtless also, whatever temper of mind the fulfilment of this command implied in the Jew, such, essentially, must be our temper of mind, whatever else it may be also; for God cannot speak two laws, He cannot love two characters—good is good, and evil is evil, and the law He gave to the Jews was, in its substance, "perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the

[1] Deut. vii. 1–5, 16. [2] Deut. xiii. 6–9.

Lord pure, enlightening the eyes; . . . . more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover," as the Psalmist proceeds, "by them is thy servant taught, and in keeping of them there is great reward."[1]

A self-mastering fearless obedience was another part of this same religious temper enjoined on the Jews, and still incumbent, as I dare affirm, on us Christians. "Be ye very *courageous* to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses."[2] It required an exceeding moral courage in the Jews to enable them to go straight forward, seduced neither by their feelings nor their reason.

Nor was the severe temper under review a duty in the early ages of Judaism only. The book of Psalms was written at different times, between David's age and the captivity, yet it plainly breathes the same hatred of sin, and opposition to sinners. I will but cite one text from the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies." And then the inspired writer proceeds to lay open his soul before God, as if conscious he had but expressed feelings which He would approve. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Further still, after the return from the captivity, after the Prophets had enlarged the compass of Divine Reve-

[1] Ps. xix. 7, 8, 10, 11. [2] Josh. xxiii. 6.

lation, and purified and heightened the religious knowledge of the nation, still this rigid and austere zeal was enjoined and enforced in all its ancient vigour by Ezra. The Jews set about a reformation; and what was its most remarkable act? Let us attend to the words of Ezra: "The princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the people of the lands; for they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands; yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass." Now let me stop to ask what would most likely be the conduct of a temporizing Christian of this day, had he, in that day, been in Ezra's place? He would, doubtless, have said that such marriages were quite unjustifiable certainly, but now that they were made, there was no remedy for it; that they must be hindered in future; but in the existing instances, the evil being done could not be undone; and, besides, that great men were involved in the sin, whom it was impossible to interfere with. This he would have said, I think, though the prohibition of Moses seemed to make such marriages null and void from the first. Now, I do not say that every one ought to have done what Ezra did, for he was supernaturally directed; but would the course he adopted have ever entered into the mind of men of this day, or can they even understand or acquiesce in it, now that they know it? for what did he? "And when I heard this thing," he says, "I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my

head, and of my beard, and sat down astonied. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away, and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice."[1] Then he offered a confession and intercession in behalf of the people; then at length he and the people came to a decision; which was no other than this—to command all persons who had married foreign wives to *put them away.* He undid the evil as well as hindered it in future. What an act of self-denying zeal was this in a multitude of people!

These are some, out of many instances, which might be brought from the Jewish history, in proof of the duty of strict and severe loyalty to God and His revealed will; and I here adduce them, first, to show that the commands involving it could not (their number and variety are so great), could not have related to a merely outward and ceremonial obedience, but must have wrought in the Jews a certain temper of mind, pleasing to God, and therefore necessary for us also to possess. Next, I deduce from that same circumstance of their number and variety, that they must be binding on us, else the Old Testament would be but a shadow of a revelation or law to the Christian.

I wish to insist on the lesson supplied merely by the Old Testament, and will not introduce into the argument the consideration of the Apostles' doctrine, which is quite in accordance with it. Yet it may be right, briefly, to refer to the sinless pattern of our Lord, and

[1] Ezra ix. 3, 4.

to what is told us of the holy inhabitants of heaven, in order to show that the temper of mind enjoined on the Jews belongs to those who are in a state of being superior to us, as well as to those who were living under a defective and temporary Dispensation. There was an occasion when our Lord is expressly said to have taken upon Him the zeal which consumed David. "Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the Temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting; and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables." Surely, unless we had this account given us by an inspired writer, we should not have believed it! Influenced by notions of our own devising, we should have said, this zealous action of our Lord's was quite inconsistent with His merciful, meek, and (what may be called) His majestic and serene temper of mind. To put aside form, to dispense with the ministry of His attendant Angels, to act before He had spoken His displeasure, to use His own hand, to hurry to and fro, to be a servant in the work of purification, surely this must have arisen from a fire of indignation at witnessing His Father's House insulted, which we sinners cannot understand. But any how, it is but the perfection of that temper which, as we have seen, was encouraged and exemplified in the Jewish Church. That energy, decision, and severity which Moses enjoined on his people, is manifested in Christ Himself, and is, therefore, undeniably a duty of man as such,

whatever be his place or attainments in the scale of human nature.

Such is the pattern afforded us by our Lord; to which add the example of the Angels which surround Him. Surely in Him is mingled "goodness and severity;" such, therefore, are all holy creatures, loving and severe. We read of their thoughts and desires in the Apocalypse, "Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." Again, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy." And again, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." Once more, "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works;"[1]—all which passages imply a deep and solemn acquiescence in God's judgments.

Thus a certain fire of zeal, showing itself, not by force and blood, but as really and certainly as if it did—cutting through natural feelings, neglecting self, preferring God's glory to all things, firmly resisting sin, protesting against sinners, and steadily contemplating their punishment, is a duty belonging to all creatures of God, a duty of Christians, in the midst of all that excellent overflowing charity which is the highest Gospel grace, and the fulfilling of the second table of the Law.

[1] Rev. xiv. 7; xvi. 5-7; xviii. 5, 6.

And such, in fact, has ever been the temper of the Christian Church; in evidence of which I need but appeal to the impressive fact that the Jewish Psalter has been the standard book of Christian devotion from the first down to this day. I wish we thought more of this circumstance. Can any one doubt that, supposing that blessed manual of faith and love had never been in use among us, great numbers of the present generation would have clamoured against it as unsuitable to express *Christian* feelings, as deficient in charity and kindness? Nay, do we not know, though I dare say it may surprise many a sober Christian to hear that it is so, that there are men at this moment who (I hardly like to mention it) wish parts of the Psalms left out of the Service as ungentle and harsh? Alas! that men of this day should rashly put their own judgment in competition with that of all the Saints of every age hitherto since Christ came — should virtually say, "Either *they* have been wrong or *we* are," thus forcing us to decide between the two. Alas! that they should dare to criticise the words of inspiration! Alas! that they should follow the steps of the backsliding Israelites, and shrink from siding with the Truth in its struggle with the world, instead of saying with Deborah, "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord!"

Now I shall make a few observations in conclusion, with a view of showing how meekness and charity are compatible with this austere and valiant temper of the Christian soldier.

1. Of course it is absolutely sinful to have any private enmities. Not the bitterest personal assaults upon

us should induce us to retaliate. We must do good for evil, "love those who hate, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who despitefully use us." It is only when it is impossible at once to be kind to them, and give glory to God, that we may cease to act kindly towards them. When David speaks of hating God's enemies, it was under circumstances when keeping friends with them would have been a desertion of the Truth. St. James says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"[1] and so, on the other hand, devotion to God's cause is enmity with the world. But no personal feeling must intrude itself in any case. We hate sinners, by putting them out of our sight, as if they were not, by annihilating them, in our affections. And this we must do, even in the case of our friends and relations, if God requires it. But in no case are we to allow ourselves in resentment or malice.

2. Next, it is quite compatible with the most earnest zeal, to offer kind offices to God's enemies when in distress. I do not say that a denial of these offices may not be a duty ordinarily; for it is our duty, as St. John tells us in his second Epistle, not even to receive them into our houses. But the case is very different where men are brought into extremity. God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."[2] We must go and do likewise, imitating the good Samaritan; and as he thought nothing of difference of nations when a Jew was in distress, in like manner we must not take

[1] James iv. 4. [2] Matt. v. 45.

account of wilful heresy, or profaneness, in such circumstances.

3. And, further, the Christian keeps aloof from sinners in order to do them good. He does so in the truest and most enlarged charity. It is a narrow and weak feeling to please a man here, and to endanger his soul. A true friend is he who speaks out, and, when a man sins, shows him that he is displeased at the sin. He who sets up no witness against his friend's sin, is "partaker of his evil deeds."[1] The Psalmist speaks in this spirit, when, after praying to God "to persecute" the ungodly "with His tempest," he adds, "fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord."[2]

Accordingly, the more zealous a Christian is, therefore is he the more charitable. The Israelite, when he entered Canaan, was told to spare neither old nor young; the weak and the infirm were to be no exception in the list of victims whose blood was to be shed. "Of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."[3] Accordingly, when the people fought against Sihon, they "took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones of every city," they "left none to remain."[4] And when Jericho was taken, "they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword."[5] What an awful office was this,

[1] 2 John 11. [2] Ps. lxxxiii. 16. [3] Deut. xx. 16.
[4] Deut. ii. 34. [5] Josh. vi. 21.

what an unutterably heart-piercing task, almost enough to make a man frantic, except as upheld by the power of Him who gave the command! Yet Moses, thus severely-minded to do God's will, was the meekest of men. Samuel, too, who sent Saul to slay in Amalek "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," was, from his youth up, the wise and heavenly-minded guide and prophet of Israel. David, who had a fiery zeal, so as even to consume him, was (as we see by his Psalms) most tender-hearted and gentle in his feelings and thoughts. Doubtless, while the servants of God executed His judgments, they still could bend in pity and in hope over the young and old whom they slew with the sword—merciful amid their severity—an unspeakable trial, doubtless, of faith and self-mastery, and requiring a very exalted and refined spirit successfully to undergo. Doubtless, as they slew those who suffered for the sins of their fathers, their thoughts turned, first to the fall of Adam, next to that unseen state where all inequalities are righted, and they surrendered themselves as instruments unto the Lord, of mysteriously working out good through evil.

And shall *we* faint at our far lesser trials when they bore the greater? Spared the heavy necessity of piercing with the spear of Phinehas, and of hewing Agag in Gilgal—allowed to take instead of inflicting suffering and "to make a difference" instead of an indiscriminate severity—shall we, like cowards, shrink from bearing our lighter burdens, which our Lord commands, and in which He sets us the pattern? Shall we be perversely persuaded by the appearance of amiableness or kindness

in those whom God's word bids us depart from as heretics, or profligate livers, or troublers of the Church? Joseph could speak strangely to his brethren, and treat them as spies, put one of them in prison, and demand another from Canaan, while he hardly refrained himself in doing so, and his bowels yearned over them; and by turns he punished them, and wept for them. Oh, that there was in us this high temper of mingled austerity and love! Barely do we conceive of severity by itself, and of kindness by itself; but who unites them? We think we cannot be kind without ceasing to be severe. Who is there that walks through the world, wounding according to the rule of zeal, and scattering balm freely in the fulness of love; smiting as a duty, and healing as a privilege; loving most when he seems sternest, and embracing them most tenderly whom in semblance he treats roughly? What a state we are in, when any one who rehearses the plain threats of our Lord and His Apostles against sinners, or ventures to defend the anathemas of His Church, is thought unfeeling rather than merciful; when they who separate from the irreligious world are blamed as fanciful and extravagant, and those who confess the truth, as it is in Jesus, are said to be bitter, hot of head, and intemperate! Yet, with God's grace, with the history of the Old Testament before us, and the fearful recompense, to warn us, which came upon backsliding Israel, we, the Ministers of Christ, dare not keep silence amid this great error. In behalf of Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who yielded up His precious life for us, and now feeds us with His own blood, for the sake of the souls whom He has

redeemed, and whom, by a false and cruel charity, the world would keep in ignorance and sin, we cannot refrain; and if His Holy Spirit be with us, as we trust He is, whatever betides, whatever is coming on this country, speak the truth we will, and overcome in our speaking we must; for He has given us to overcome!

SERMON XIV.

SUBMISSION TO CHURCH AUTHORITY.

PROV. iv. 24–27.

"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

PRECEPTS such as these come home with the force of truth, even to minds which fain would resist them, from their seriousness and practical wisdom, putting aside the authority of inspiration. At no time and under no circumstances are they without their application; at the present time, when religious unity and peace are so lamentably disregarded, and novel doctrines and new measures alone are popular, they naturally remind us of the duty of obedience to the Church, and of the sin of departing from it, or what our Litany prays against under the name of "heresy and schism." It may seem out of place to speak of this sin here, because those who commit it are not likely to be in Church to profit by what might be said about it; yet the commission of it affects even those who do not commit it, by making them indifferent to it. For this reason, and

because it is right that even such persons as are firmest in their adherence to the Church should know why they adhere to it, I will consider some of the popular objections which are made to such adherence, by those who account it, not sinful indeed (though many go even this length), but unnecessary.

You know time was when there was but one vast body of Christians, called the Church, throughout the world. It was found in every country where the name of Christ was named; it was everywhere governed in the same way by Bishops; it was everywhere descended from the Apostles through the line of those Bishops; and it was everywhere in perfect peace and unity together, branch with branch, all over the world. Thus it fulfilled the prophecy: "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: for there are set Thrones of judgment, the Thrones of the House of David."[1] There were, indeed, separatists and dissenters, then as now, but they were many and various, not one body like the Church; they were short-lived, had a beginning after the Apostles, and came to an end, first one and then another. But now all this beauty of Jerusalem is miserably defaced. That vast Catholic body, "the Holy Church throughout all the world," is broken into many fragments by the power of the Devil; just as some huge barrier cliff which once boldly fronted the sea is at length cleft, parted, overthrown by the waves. Some portions of it are altogether gone, and those that remain are separated from each other. We are the English Catholics; abroad are the Roman Catholics, some of

[1] Ps. cxxii. 3, 5.

whom are also among ourselves; elsewhere are the Greek Catholics, and so on. And thus we stand in this day of rebuke and blasphemy—clinging to our own portion of the Ancient Rock which the waters are roaring round and would fain overflow—trusting in God—looking for the dawn of day, which "will at length come and will not tarry," when God will save us from the rising floods, if we have courageously kept our footing where He has placed us, neither yielding to the violence of the waves which sweep over us, nor listening to the crafty invitations of those who offer us an escape in vessels not of God's building.

Now I am going to notice and refute some of the bad arguments by which the children of this world convey their invitation.

1. First they say, "Why keep so strictly to one body of Christians when there are so many other bodies also—so many denominations, so many persuasions—all soldiers of Christ, like so many different armies, all advancing in one cause against one enemy? Surely this exclusive attachment to one party," so they speak, "to the neglect of other Christians who profess a like doctrine, and only differ in forms, is the sign of a narrow and illiberal mind. Christianity is an universal gift; why then limit its possession to one set of men and one kind of Church government, instead of allowing all who choose to take it to themselves in any way they please?"

Now surely those who thus speak should begin with answering Scripture, not questioning us; for Scripture certainly recognizes but "one body" of Christians as

explicitly as "one Spirit, one faith, one Lord, and one God and Father of all."[1] As far as the text of Scripture goes, it is as direct a contradiction of it to speak of more than one body as to speak of more than one Spirit. On the other hand, Scripture altogether contemplates the *existence* of persuasions, as they are fitly called, round about this one body, for it speaks of them; but it does not hint ever so faintly that, because they exist, therefore they must be acknowledged. So much the contrary, that it says, "There must be heresies," that is private persuasions, self-formed bodies, "among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." Again, "A man that is a heretic," that is, one who adopts some opinion of his own in religious matters, and gets about him followers, "after the first and second admonition, reject." And again, "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them."[2] Now, we are of those who, in accordance with these directions, have done our best to keep clear of such human doctrines and private opinions, adhering to that one Body Catholic which alone was founded by the Apostles, and will last till the end of all things. And it is surely better thus implicitly to believe and obey God's voice in Scripture than to reason; it is more tolerable to be called narrow-minded by man, than to be pronounced self-wise and self-sufficient by God; it is happier to be thought over-scrupulous, with the Bible, than to have the world's praise for liberality without it.

But again, who is bold enough to say that "it would be a narrow and niggardly appointment, were the bless-

[1] Eph. iv. 4–6. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 19; Tit. iii. 10; Rom. xvi. 17.

ings of the Gospel stored up in one body or set of persons to the exclusion of others?" Let him see to it, how he opposes God's universal scheme of providence which we see before our eyes. Christianity is a blessing for the whole earth—granted; but it does not therefore follow (to judge from what we otherwise know of God's dealings with us) that none have been specially commissioned to dispense the blessing. Mercies given to multitudes are not less mercies because they are made to flow from particular sources. Indeed, most of the great appointments of Divine goodness are marked by this very character of what men call *exclusiveness.* God distributes numberless benefits to all men, but He does so through a few select instruments. The few are favoured for the good of the many. Wealth, power, gifts of mind, learning, all tend towards the welfare of the community; yet, for all that, they are not given at once to all, but channelled out to the many through the few. And so the blessings of the Gospel are open to the whole world, as freely given as light or fire; yet even light has had its own receptacle since the fourth day of creation, and fire has been hidden in the flinty rock, as if to show us that the light and fire of our souls are not gained without the use of means, nor except from special sources.

Again, as to the Ministerial Succession being a form, and adherence to it a form, it can only be called a form because we do not see its effects; did anything *visible* attend it, we should no longer call it a form. Did a miracle always follow a baptism or a return into the Church, who would any longer call it a form? that is,

we call it a form, only so long as we refuse to walk by *faith*, which dispenses with things visible. Faith sees things not to be forms, if commanded, which seem like forms; it realizes consequences. Men ignorant in the sciences would predict no result from chemical and the like experiments; they would count them a form and a pretence. What is prayer but a form? that is, who (to speak generally) sees anything come of it? But we believe it, and so are blessed. In what sense is adherence to the Church a form in which prayer is not also? The benefit of the one is not seen, nor of the other; the one will not profit the ungodly and careless, nor will the other; the one is commanded in Scripture, so is the other. Therefore, to say that Church-union is a form, is no disparagement of it; forms are the very food of faith.

2. However, it may be argued, that, "whatever was the cause, and whatever was intended by Divine Providence, many sects there are;" and that, "if unity be a duty, as members of the Church maintain, the best, the only way to effect it now, is for them to relax their strictness and join in one with all sects upon whatever terms." I answer by asking, whether we have any *leave* so to do, any commission to alter any part of what God has appointed; whether we might not as well pretend to substitute another ordinance for Baptism as to annul the rights of the Church Catholic, and put human societies and teachers of man's creating on a level with it? Even Balaam felt what was the power of a Divine appointment. "He hath blessed," he says, "*and I cannot reverse it.*" Even holy Isaac, much as

he wished it, could not change the course of the blessing once conferred, or the decree of God. He cried out concerning Jacob, "yea, and he shall be blessed;" for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth," "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man," "but of God that showeth mercy." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."[1]

Men, who have themselves separated from the Church, sometimes urge a union among all Christians in the following way: they say, "We dissent from you; yet we will cast aside our forms if you will cast aside yours. Thus there will be mutual concession. What are forms, so that our hearts are one?" Nay, but there is not, there cannot be, a like heart and spirit, from the very nature of the case, between us and them, for obedience to the Church is one part of our spirit. Those who think much of submission to her authority, as we do, plainly do differ in spirit from those who think little of it. Such persons, then, however well they mean it, yet, in fact, ask us to give up something, while they give up nothing themselves; for that is not much to give up which a man sets no value upon. All they give up is what they themselves disparage by calling it a form. They call *our* holy discipline also a form, but *we* do not: and it is *not* a mere form in our judgments, though it may be in theirs. They call it a human invention, just as they call their own; but, till we call it so also, till they have first convinced us that it is, it must be a sacrifice in us to give it up, such as

[1] Numb. xxiii. 20; Gen. xxvii. 33; Rom. ix. 16; John i. 13; Rom. xi. 29.

they cannot possibly make. They cannot make such sacrifice, because they have made it already, or their fathers before them, when they left the Church. They cannot make it, for they have no affections to sacrifice in the matter; whereas our piety, our reverence, our faith, our love adhere to the Church of the Apostles, and could not (were desertion possible, which God forbid!) could not be torn away from it without many wounds and much anguish. Surely, then, it is craft, or over simplicity in those who differ from us thus to speak. They strip themselves of what we consider an essential of holiness, the decencies and proprieties of the Ancient Rule. Then, being unclothed, they are forced to array themselves in new forms and ordinances, as they best may; and these novelties, which their own hands have sewed together to cover them, which they never revered, and which are soon to wither, they purpose (as though) to sacrifice to us, provided we, on our part, will cast from us the Lord's own clothing, that sanctity and sobriety of order, which is the gift of Christ, the earnest of His imputed merits, the type and the effectual instrument of His work in our hearts. This, truly, would be exchanging the fine gold for brass; or, like unthankful Esau, bartering our enduring birthright for an empty and transitory benefit.

3. But the argument is continued. "Well," it may be said, "even granting that obedience to the Church be a Scripture duty, still, when there are erroneous teachers in it, surely it is a higher duty to desert them for their error's sake than to keep to them for form's sake." Now, before this question can be answered, the

error must be specified which this or that teacher holds. The plain and practical question we have to decide is, whether his error be such as to suspend his power of administering the Sacraments. It must be deadly indeed and monstrous to effect this; and, surely, this ministry of the Sacraments, not of the outward word—of the spirit, not of the letter—is his principal power and our principal need. It is our interest, it is our soul's interest, that we keep to those who minister divine benefits, even though they "offend in many things." And it is plainly our duty also. If they be in error, let us pray for them, not abandon them. If they sin against us, let not us sin against them. Let us return good for evil. Thus David acted even towards Saul his persecutor. He "behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with Him."[1] The cruelty of Saul was an extreme case; yet David's "eyes looked right on," and "he turned not to the right hand nor the left." He still honoured Saul, as put over him by Almighty God. So ought we, in St. Paul's words, to "obey them that have the rule over us, and submit ourselves." In truth, the notion that errors in a particular teacher justify separation from the Church itself, is founded in a mistake as to the very object (as it may be considered) for which teaching was committed to it. If individual teachers were infallible, there would be no need of order and rule at all. If we had a living Head upon earth, such as once our Saviour was with His disciples, teaching and directing us in all things, the visible Church might *so far* be dispensed

[1] 1 Sam. xviii. 14.

with. But, since we have not, a form of doctrine, a system of laws, a bond of subordination connecting all in one, is the next best mode of securing the stability of sacred Truth. The whole body of Christians thus become the *trustees* of it, to use the language of the world, and, in fact, have thus age after age transmitted it down to ourselves. Thus, teachers have been bound to teach in one way not in another, as well as hearers to hear. As, then, we have a share in the advantage, let us not complain of sharing in the engagement; as we enjoy the truth at this day by the strictness of those who were before us, let us not shrink from undergoing that through which we have inherited it. If hearers break the rule of discipline, why should not teachers break the rule of faith? and if we find fault with our teacher, even while he is restrained by the Church's rule, how much greater would be our complaint when he was not so restrained? Let us not, then, be impatient of an appointment which effects so much, on the ground that it does not effect all. Let us not forget that rules presuppose the risk of error, but rather reflect whether they do not do more than they fail to do. Let us be less selfish than to think of ourselves only. Let us look out upon the whole community, the poor, the ignorant, the wayward, and the mistaken. Let us consider whether it will be prudent to become responsible for the Church's ultimately withdrawing from our land, which we shall be (as far as in us lies) by our withdrawing from it.

4. But it may be said, "Faith is not a matter of words, but of the heart. It is more than the formal doctrine,

it is the temper and spirit of this or that teacher which is wrong. His creed may be orthodox, but his religion is not vital; and surely external order must not lie upon us as a burden, stifling and destroying the true inward fellowship between Christian and Christian." Now let it be carefully noted, that if order is to be preserved at all, it must be at the expense of what seems to be of more consequence, *viz.*, the so-called communion of the heart between Christians. This peculiarity is involved in its very nature; and surely our Saviour knew this when He enjoined it. For consider a moment. True spiritual feeling, heartfelt devotion, lively faith, and the like, do not admit of being described, defined, ascertained in any one fixed way; as is implied indeed in the very objection under consideration. We form our judgment of them, whatever it be, by a number of little circumstances, of language, manner, and conduct, which cannot be put into words, which to no two beholders appear exactly the same, insomuch that if every one is to be satisfied, every one must have the power of drawing his line for himself. But if every one follow his own rule of fellowship, how can there possibly be but "one body," and in what sense are those words of the Apostle to be taken?

Again, this or that person may be more or less religious in speech and conduct; how are we to draw the line, even according to our own individual standard, and say who are to be in our Church and who out of it? Scandalous offenders indeed and open heretics might be excluded at once; but it would be far easier to say whom to put out than whom to let in, unless we let in

all. From the truest believer to the very infidel there may be interposed a series of men, more or less religious, in human eyes, gradually filling up the whole interval. Even if we would infallibly decide between good and bad, life would be spent in the work; what our success really will be, may be foretold from the instances of those who attempt to do so, and who not unfrequently mistake for highly-gifted Christians men who are almost unbelievers. But, granting we have some extraordinary gift of discernment, still any how we could not see more than He sees, who implies that the faith of all of us is but immature and in its rudiments, by His very postponement of the final judgment;—so that to draw a line at all, and yet to include just all who seem religious, are things of necessity incompatible with each other.

On the other hand, forms are precise and definite. Once broken, they are altogether broken. There are no degrees of breaking them; either they are observed or they are not. It seems, then, on the whole, that if we leave the Church, in order to join what appears a less formal, a more spiritual, religion elsewhere, we break a commandment for certain, and we do not for certain secure to ourselves a benefit.

5. Lastly, it may be asked, "Are we then to keep aloof from those whom we think good men, granting that it would be better that they should be in the Church?" We need not, we must not, keep aloof. We are not bound, indeed, to court their society, but we are bound not to shrink from them when we fall in with them, except, indeed, they be the actual authors and fomenters of division. We are bound to love them

and pray for them; not to be harsh with them, or revile or despise them, but to be gentle, patient, apt to teach, merciful, to make allowance, to interpret their conduct for the best. We would, if we could, be one with them in heart and in form, thinking a loving unity the glory and crown of Christian faith; and we will try all means to effect this; but we feel, and we cannot conceal it, we feel that, if we and they are to be one, they must come over to us. We desire to meet together, but it must be in the Church, not on neutral ground, or rather an enemy's, the open inhospitable waste of this world, but within that sheltered heritage whose land-marks have long since been set up. If Christ has constituted one Holy Society (which He has done); if His Apostles have set it in order (which they did), and have expressly bidden us (as they have in Scripture) not to undo what they have begun; and if (in matter of fact) their Work so set in order and so blessed is among us this very day (as it is), and we partakers of it, it were a traitor's act in us to abandon it, an unthankful slight on those who have preserved it for so many ages, a cruel disregard of those who are to come after us, nay of those now alive who are external to it and might otherwise be brought into it. We must transmit as we have received. We did not make the Church, we may not unmake it. As we believe it to be a Divine Ordinance, so we must ever protest against separation from it as a sin. There is not a dissenter living, but, inasmuch and so far as he dissents, is in a sin. It may, in this or that instance, be a sin of infirmity, or carelessness, nay of ignorance; it may be a sin of

the society to which a man belongs, not his own, a ceremonial offence, not a personal; still it is in its nature sinful. It may be mixed up with much that is good; it may be a perversion of conscience, or again, an inconsistency in him; it may be connected more or less with piety towards his forefathers; still, considered as such, it cannot but be a blemish and a disadvantage, and, if he is saved, he will be saved, not through it, but in spite of it. So far forth as he dissents, he is under a cloud; and though we too may, for what we know, have as great sins to answer for, taking his sin at the greatest, and though we pray that Christ will vouchsafe, in some excellent way, known to Himself, to "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle," all "who love Him uncorruptly," even if separate from the glories of His Church on earth, still protest we should and must against separation itself, and wilful continuance in it, as evil—as nothing short of "the gainsaying of Core," and the true child of that sin which lost us Eden.

Nor does the sin of separation end in itself. Never suppose, my brethren, whatever the world may say, that a man is neither better nor worse, in his own faith and conduct, for separating from the Church. Of course we cannot "try the heart and the reins," or decide about individuals; still, this much seems clear, that, on the whole, deliberate insubordination is the symptom, nay, often the cause and first beginning of an unhumbled, wilful, self-dependent, contentious, jealous spirit; and, as far as any man allows himself in acts of it, so far has he upon him the tokens of pride or of coldness of heart, going before or following after. Cold-

ness and pride—these sins are not peculiar, alas, to those who leave us; that we know full well. We all have the seeds of them within us, and it is our shame and condemnation if we do not repress them. But between us, if we be cold or proud, and those who are active in dissent, there is this clear difference—that proud reliance on self, or that cold formality, which may also be found in the Church, these, though found in it, are not fruits of it, do not rise from connection with it, but are inconsistent with it. For to obey is to be meek, not proud; and to obey, for Christ's sake, is to be zealous, not cold; whereas, wilful separation or turbulent conduct, forming religious meetings of our own, opposing our private judgment to those who have the rule over us, disaffection towards them, and the like feelings and courses, are the very effects and the sure forerunners of pride, or impatience, or restlessness, or self-will, or lukewarmness; so that these sins in members of the Church are in spite of the Church, but in separatists are involved in their separating.

"Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." What have we, private Christians, to do with hopes and fears of earth, with schemes of change, the pursuit of novelties, or dreams of reforms? The world is passing like a shadow; the day of Christ is hastening on. It is our wisdom, surely, to use what has been provided for us, instead of lusting after what

we have not, asking flesh to eat, and gazing wistfully upon Egypt, or on the heathen around us. Faith has no leisure to act the busy politician, to bring the world's language into the sacred fold, or to use the world's jealousies in a divine polity, to demand rights, to flatter the many, or to court the powerful. What is faith's highest wish and best enjoyment? A dying saint shall answer. It is related of a meek and holy confessor of our own, shortly before his departure, that when, after much pain, he was asked by a friend, "What more special thing he would recommend for one's whole life?" he briefly replied, "*uniform obedience*," by which he meant, as his biographer tells us, that the happiest state of life was one in which we had not to command or direct, but *to obey solely;* not having to choose for ourselves, but having our path of duty, our mode of life, our fortunes marked out for us.[1] This lot, indeed, as is plain, cannot be the lot of all; but it is the lot of the many. Thus God pours out His blessings largely, and puts trial on the few; but men do not understand their own gain, and run into trials as being unfit for enjoyment. May He give us grace to cherish a wiser mind, to make much of our privilege, if we have it, to serve and be at rest; and, if we have it not, to covet it, and to bear dutifully as but a misfortune to a sinner, that freedom from restraint which the world boasts in as a chief good!

[1] Fell's "Life of Hammond."

SERMON XV.

CONTEST BETWEEN TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN THE CHURCH.

MATT. xiii. 47, 48.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

IN the Apostle's age, the chief contest between Truth and Falsehood lay in the war waged by the Church against the world, and the world against the Church —the Church, the aggressor in the name of the Lord; the world, stung with envy and malice, rage and pride, retaliating spiritual weapons with carnal, the Gospel with persecution, good with evil, in the cause of the Devil. But of the conflict *within* the Church, such as it is at this day, Christians knew comparatively little. True, the Prophetic Spirit told them that "even of their ownselves should men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them;" that "in the last days perilous times should come."[1] Also they had the experience of their own and former times to show them, as in type, that in the Church evil will

[1] Acts xx. 30; 2 Tim. iii. 1.

always mingle with the good. Thus, at the flood, there were eight men in the Ark, and one of them was reprobate; out of twelve Apostles, one was a devil; out of seven Deacons, one (as it is said) fell away into heresy; out of twelve tribes, one is dropped at the final sealing. These intimations, however, whether by instance or prophecy, were not sufficient to realize to them, before the event, the serious and awful truth implied in the text, viz.—that the warfare which Christ began between his little flock and the world should be in no long while transferred into the Church itself, and be carried on by members of that Church one with another.

This, I say, the early Christians did not see fulfilled, as our eyes see it; and so hard is it to possess ourselves of a true conviction about it, that even at this day, when it may be plainly seen, men will not see it. They will not so open and surrender their minds to Divine truth, as to admit that the Holy Church has unholy members, that blessings are given to the unworthy, that "the Kingdom of Heaven is like a net that gathers of every kind." They evade this mysterious appointment in various ways. Sometimes they deny that bad men are really in God's Church, which they think consists only of good men. They have invented an Invisible Church, distinct and complete at present, and peopled by saints only,—as if Scripture said one word, anywhere, of a spiritual body existing in this world separate from, and independent of, the Visible Church; and they consider the Visible Church to be nothing but a mere part of this world, an establish-

ment, sect, or party. Or, again, while they admit it as a Divine ordinance, they lower its standard of faith and holiness, and its privileges; and, considering the communion of saints to be but a name, and all Christians to be about alike, they effectually destroy all notions, whether of a Church or of a conflict. Thus, in one way or other, they refuse to admit the idea, contained in the text, that the dissimilitude, the enmity, and the warfare which once existed between the world and the Church, is now transferred into the Church itself.

But let us try, with God's blessing, to get a firm hold upon this truth, and see if we cannot draw some instruction from it. The text says, that "the Kingdom of Heaven," that is, the Christian Church, "is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Elsewhere St. Paul says, "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour."[1] Now, passages such as these admit of a very various application. I shall consider them here with reference to the contest between Truth and Falsehood in the Church.

Doubtless, in the eye of natural reason, it would be a privilege, were the enemies of Christ and of our souls separated from us, and did the trial of our faith take place on some broad questions, about which there could be no mistake; but such is not the fact "in the wisdom of God." Faith and unbelief, humbleness and pride, love and selfishness, have been from the Apostles' age united in one and the same body; nor can any means

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 20.

of man's device disengage the one from the other. All who are within the Church have the same privileges; they are all baptized, all admitted to the Holy Eucharist, all taught in the Truth, all profess the Truth. At all times, indeed, there have been those who have avowed corrupt doctrine or indulged themselves in open vice; and whom, in consequence, it was easy to detect and avoid. But these are few; the great body in the Christian Church profess one and the same faith, and seem one and all to agree together. Yet, among these persons, thus apparently unanimous, is the real inveterate conflict proceeding, as from the beginning, between good and evil. Some of these are wise, some foolish. Who belong to the one, and to the other party, is hid from us, and will be hid till the day of judgment; nor are they at present individually formed upon the perfect model of good or evil; they vary one with another in the degree and mode of their holding to the one or the other; but that there are two parties in the Church, two parties, however vague and indefinite their outlines, among those who live, in one sense, as familiar friends, I mean, who eat the same spiritual Food, and profess the same Creed, is certain.

Next, what do they contend about? how and where is their conflict? The Apostles contended about the truth of the Gospel with unbelievers; their immediate successors contended, though within the Church, yet against open heresies, such as they could meet, confute, and cast out; but in after times, in our own day, now, what do the two secret parties in the Church, the elect and the false-hearted, what do they contend about?

It is difficult to answer this question suitably with the reverence due to this sacred place, in which the language of the world should not be heard. Yet, in so important a matter, one would wish to say something. That contest, which was first about the truth of the Gospel itself, next about the truth of doctrine, is now commonly about very small matters, of an every-day character, of public affairs, or domestic business, or parochial concerns, which serve as tests of our religious state quite as truly as greater things, in God's unerring judgment—serve as powerfully to form and train us for heaven or for hell.

I say, that as the early Christians were bound to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," so the trial of our obedience commonly lies in taking this or that side in a multitude of questions, in which there happen to be two sides, and which come before us almost continually; and, before attempting to explain what I mean, I would have you observe how parallel this state of things is to God's mode of trying and disciplining us in other respects.

For instance, how is our devotion to Christ shown? Ordinarily, not in great matters, not in giving up house and lands for His sake, but in making little sacrifices which the world would ridicule, if it knew of them; in abridging ourselves of comforts for the sake of the poor, in sacrificing our private likings to religious objects, in going to Church at a personal inconvenience, in taking pleasure in the society of religious men, though not rich, or noble, or accomplished, or gifted, or enter-

taining; in matters, all of them of very little moment in themselves.

How is self-denial shown? Not in literally bearing Christ's Cross, and living on locusts and wild honey, but in such light abstinences as come in our way, in some poor efforts at fasting and the like, in desiring to be poor rather than rich, solitary or lowly rather than well-connected, in living within our income, in avoiding display, in being suspicious of comforts and luxuries; all of which are too trifling for the person observing them to think about, yet have their use in proving and improving his heart.

How is Christian valour shown? Not in resisting unto blood, but in withstanding mistaken kindness, in enduring importunity, in not shrinking from surprising and hurting those we love, in undergoing little losses, inconveniences, censures, slights, rather than betray what we believe to be God's Truth, be it ever so small a portion of it.

As then Christian devotion, self-denial, courage, are tried in this day in little things, so is Christian faith also. In the Apostles' age faith was shown in the great matter of joining either the Church, or the pagan or Jewish multitude. It is shown in this day by taking this side or that side in the many questions of opinion and conduct which come before us, whether domestic, or parochial, or political, or of whatever kind.

Take the most unlettered peasant in the humblest village; his trial lies in acting for the Church or against it in his own place. He may happen to be at work with others, or taking refreshment with others; and he

may hear religion spoken against, or the Church, or the King; he may hear voices raised together in scoffing or violence; he must withstand laugh and jest, evil words and rudeness, and witness for Christ. Thus he carries on, in his day, the eternal conflict between Truth and Falsehood.

Another, in a higher class of society, has a certain influence in parish matters, in the application of charities, the appointment of officers, and the like; he, too, must act, as in God's sight, for the Truth's sake, as Christ would have him.

Another has a certain political power; he has a vote to bestow, or dependents to advise; he has a voice to raise, and substance to contribute. Let him act for religion, not as if there were not a God in the world.

My brethren, I must not venture to keep silence in respect to a province of Christian duty, in which men are especially tried at this day, and in which they especially fail.

It is sometimes said that religion is not (what is called) political. Now there is a bad sense of the word "political," and religion is nothing that is bad. But there is also a good sense of the word, and in this sense whoever says that religion is not political speaks as erringly, and (whether ignorantly or not) offends with his tongue as certainly, as if in St. Paul's time a man had said it mattered not whether he was Christian or heathen; for what the question of Christian or no Christian was in the Apostle's day, such are questions of politics now. It is as right to take one side, and as

wrong to take the other, now, in that multitude of matters which comes before us of a social nature, as it was right to become a Christian in St. Paul's day, and wrong to remain a heathen.

I am not saying *which* side is right and which is wrong, in the ever-varying course of social duty, much less am I saying that all religious people are on one side and all irreligious on the other (for then would that division between good and evil take place, which the text and other parables assure us is not to be till the Day of Judgment); I only say there *is* a right and a wrong, that it is not a matter of indifference which side a man takes, that a man will be judged hereafter for the side he takes.

When a man (for instance) says that he takes part against the King or against the Church, because he thinks kingly power or established Churches contrary to Scripture, I think him as far from the truth as light is from darkness; but I understand him. He takes a religious ground, and, whatever I may think of his doctrine, I praise him for that. I had rather he should take a religious ground (if in sincerity) and be against the Church, than a worldly selfish ground, and be for it; that is, if done in earnest, not in pretence, I think it speaks more hopefully for his soul. I had rather the Church were levelled to the ground by a nation, really, honestly, and seriously, thinking they did God service in doing so (fearful indeed as the sin would be), than that it should be upheld by a nation on the *mere* ground of maintaining property, for I think this a much greater sin. I think that the worshipper of mammon will be

in worse case before Christ's Judgment-seat than the mistaken zealot. If a man must be one or the other (though he ought to be neither), but if I must choose for him, I had rather he should be Saul raging like a wild beast against the Church, than Gallio caring for none of these things, or Demas loving the present world, or Simon trafficking with sacred gifts, or Ananias grudging Christ his substance, and seeking to be saved as cheaply as possible. There would be more chance of such a man's conversion to the Truth; and, if not converted, less punishment reserved for him at the Last Day. Our Lord says to the Church of Laodicea, "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will cast thee from My mouth!"[1]

Men, however, generally act from mixed motives; so I do not mean that they are at once in a fearful peril, or as bad as fanatical revolutionists, for having some regard to the security of property, while they defend what is called the Church Established;—far from it, though I still think it would be better if the thought of religion absorbed all other considerations:—but I am speaking against an avowed doctrine maintained in this day, that religion has nothing to do with political matters; which will not be true till it is true that God does not govern the world, for as God rules in human affairs, so must His servants obey in them. And what we have to fear more than anything else at this time is, that persons who are sound on this point, and do believe that the concerns of the nation ought to be carried on

[1] Rev. iii. 15, 16.

on religious principles, should be afraid to avow it, and should ally themselves, *without protesting*, with those who deny it; lest they should keep their own opinion to themselves, and act with the kindred of Gallio, Demas, Simon, and Ananias, on some mere secular basis, the mere defence of property, the security of our institutions, considered merely as secular, the maintenance of our national greatness; forgetting that, as no man can serve two masters, God and mammon, so no man can at once be in the counsels of the servants of the two;—forgetting that the Church, in which they and others are, is a net gathering of *every* kind; that it is no proof that others are to be followed and supported in all things, because they happen to be in it and profess attachment to it; and that though we are bound to associate in a general way with all (except, indeed, such as openly break the rules of the Church, heretics, drunkards, evil livers, and the like, who ought of course to be put out of it), yet we are not bound to countenance all men in all they do, and are ever bound to oppose bad principles—bound to attempt to raise the standard of faith and obedience in that multitude of men whom, though we disapprove in many respects, we dare not affirm to be entirely destitute of the life of the Holy Ghost, and not to suffer friend or stranger to take part against the Truth without warning him of it according to our opportunities.

Lastly, this union of the True and the False in the Church, which I have been speaking of, has ever existed in the governing part of it as well as among the people at large. Our Saviour sets this truth before us in the

twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, in which He bids His hearers obey their spiritual rulers in all lawful things, even though they be unworthy of their office, because they hold it—obey "as unto the Lord and not to men." "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works, for they say, and do not." And no one can read, ever so little, the history of the Church since He was on earth, without perceiving that, under all the forms of obedience and subordination, of kind offices and social intercourse, which Christ enjoins, a secret contest has been carried on, in the most sacred chambers of the temple, between Truth and Falsehood;—rightly, peaceably, lovingly by some, uncharitably by others, with a strange mixture at times of right principles and defective temper, or of sincerity and partial ignorance; still, on the whole, a contest such as St. John's against Diotrephes, or St. Paul's against Ananias the High Priest, or Timothy's against Hymeneus and Alexander. Meantime, the rules of ecclesiastical discipline have been observed on both sides, as well as the professions of faith, as conditions of the contest; nevertheless, the contest has proceeded.

Now I would have every one who hears me bring what I have said home as a solemn truth to his own mind;—the solemn truth, that there is nothing indifferent in our conduct, no part of it without its duties, no room for trifling, lest we trifle with eternity. It is very common to speak of our political and social privileges as *rights*, which we may do what we like

with; whereas they merely impose *duties* on us in God's sight. A man says, "I have a right to do this or that; I have a right to give my vote here or there; I have a right to further this or that measure." Doubtless, you *have* a right—you have the right of freewill—you have from your birth the birthright of being a free agent, of doing right or wrong, of saving yourself or ruining yourself; you have the right, that is, you have the power—(to speak plainly) the power to damn yourself; but (alas!) a poor consolation will it be to you in the next world, to know that your ruin was all your own fault, as brought upon you by yourself—for what you have said comes to nothing more than this; and be quite sure, men do not lose their souls by some one extraordinary act, but by a course of acts; and the careless, or rather, the self-sufficient and haughty-minded use of your political power, this way or that, at your pleasure, which is now so common, is among those acts by which men save or lose them. The young man whom Solomon speaks of, thought he had a right to indulge his lusts, or, as the rich man in the Gospel, to "take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" but the preacher says to him, "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: *but know thou, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*"[1]

So, again, many a man, when warned against the sin of leaving the Church, or of wandering about from one place of worship to another, says, "he has a right to

[1] Eccles. xi. 9.

do so." So it is, he has a strange notion that it is an Englishman's right to think what he will, and do what he will, in matters of religion. Nay, it *is* the right of the *whole world,* not ours alone; it *is* the attribute of all rational beings to have a right to do wrong, if they will. Yet, after all, there is but one right way, and there a hundred wrong ways. You *may* do as you will; but the first who exercised that right was the devil when he fell; and every one of us, when he does this or that in matters between himself and his God, merely because he *wills* it, and not for conscience' sake, is (so far) following the devil's pattern.

Now let us put aside these vain fancies, and look at our position steadily. Every one of us here assembled is either a vessel of mercy or a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; or rather, I should say, *will be* such at the Last Day, and now is acting *towards* the one or the other. We cannot judge each other, we cannot judge ourselves. We only know about ourselves whether or no we are in some measure trying to serve God; we know He has loved us and "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ," and desires our salvation. We know about others around us that they too have been blessed by the same Saviour, and are to be looked on as our brethren, till, by word or deed, they openly renounce their brotherhood. Still it is true that the solemn process of *separation* between bad and good is ever going on. The net has at present gathered of every kind. At the end of the world will be the final division; meanwhile there is a gradual sorting and sifting, silent but sure, towards it. It is also true that all the matters

which come before us in the course of life are trials of our faith, and instruments of our purification. It is also true that certain principles and actions are right and others wrong. It is true, moreover, that our part lies in finding out what is right, and observing and contending for it. And without judging of our brethren's state, and, again, without being over-earnest about little matters, it is our duty plainly to witness against others when we think them wrong, and to impress our seriousness upon them by our very manner towards them; lest we suffer sin in them, and so become partakers of it.

If all this be true, may God Himself, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, enable us heartily to act upon it! May He give us that honesty and simplicity of mind, which looks at things as He views them, realizes what is unseen, puts aside all the shadows and mists of pride, party-feeling, or covetousness; and not only knows and does what is right, but does it because it knows it, and that not from mere reason and on grounds of argument, but from the heart itself, with that inward and pure sense, and scrupulous fear, and keen faith, and generous devotion, which does not need arguments, except as a means of strengthening itself, and of persuading and satisfying others.

SERMON XVI.

THE CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE.

2 Tim. ii. 20.

"*In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.*"

IN these words St. Paul speaks of the Church as containing within it good and bad, after our Saviour's pattern, who, in the parables of the Net and of the Tares, had, from the first, announced the same serious truth. That Holy House which Christ formed in order to be the treasury and channel of His grace to mankind, over which His Apostles presided at the first, and after them others whom they appointed, was, even from their time, the seat of unbelief and unholiness as well as of true religion. Even among the Apostles themselves, one was "a devil." No wonder then that ever since, whether among the rulers or the subjects of the Church, sin has abounded, where nothing but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost should have been found. It is so at this day; our eyes see it; we cannot deny it.

But, though we all see it, we do not all see it in that particular light which Scripture sheds upon it. We

often account for it differently, we view it in a different relation to other truths, from that in which it really stands. In other words, we admit the fact, but adopt our own theory about it. I will explain what I mean, which will introduce a subject worth considering.

The sight of the sins of Christians has led us to speak of what are called the Visible and the Invisible Church in what seems an unscriptural way. The word Church, applied to the body of Christians in this world, means but one thing in Scripture, a visible body invested with invisible privileges. Scripture does not speak of two bodies, one visible, the other invisible, each with its own complement of members. But this is a common notion at present; and it is an erroneous, and (I will add) a dangerous notion.

It is true there are some senses in which we may allowably talk of the Visible and Invisible Church. I am not finding fault with mere expressions; one is not bound in common discourse to use every word with scientific precision. It is allowable to speak of the Visible and of the Invisible Church, as two sides of one and the same thing, separated by our minds only, not in reality. For instance, in political matters, we sometimes speak of England as a nation and sometimes as a state; not meaning different things, but one certain identical thing viewed in a different relation. When we speak of the Nation, we take into account its variety of local rights, interests, attachments, customs, opinions; the character of its people, and the history of that character's formation. On the other hand, when we speak of the State, we imply the notion of orders, ranks,

and powers, of the legislative and executive departments, and the like. In like manner, no harm can come of the distinction of the Church into Visible and Invisible, while we view it as, on the whole, but one in different aspects; as Visible, because consisting (for instance) of clergy and laity—as Invisible, because resting for its life and strength upon unseen influences and gifts from Heaven. This is not really to divide into two, any more than to discriminate (as they say) between concave and convex, is to divide a curve line; which looked at outwardly is convex, but looked at inwardly, concave.

Again, we may consider the Church in one century as different from the Church in another. We may speak of the modern Church and the ancient Church; and this without meaning that these are two bodies, merely by way of denoting difference of time. In a similar way we talk of the Jewish Church and the Christian, though really both Churches are one, only under different Dispensations. "What is meant," you will ask, "by the Church in one age being the same as the Church in another?" plainly this, that there is no real line of demarcation between them, that the one is but the continuation of the other, and that you may as well talk of two Churches at this moment in the north and south of England, as two in different centuries. Properly speaking, the One Church is the whole body gathered together from all ages; so that the Church of this very age is but part of it, and this in the same sense in which the Church in England, again, in this day, is but part of the present Church Catholic.

In the next world this whole Church will be brought together in one, whenever its separate members lived, and then, too, all its unsound and unfruitful members will be dropped, so that nothing but holiness will remain in it. Here, then, is a second sense in which we may discriminate between the Church Visible and Invisible. The body of the elect, contemplated as it will be hereafter, nay, as it already exists in Paradise, we may, if we will, call the Church, and, since this blessed consummation takes place in the unseen world, we may call it the Invisible Church. Doubtless, we may speak of the Invisible Church in the sense of the Church in glory, or the Church in rest. There is no error in such a mode of speech. We do not make two Churches, we only view the Christian body as existing in the world of spirits; and the present Church visible, so far as it really has part and lot in the same blessedness.

Still further, we may, by a figure of speech, speak of the members of the existing Church, who are at present walking in God's faith and fear, as the Invisible Church; not meaning thereby that they constitute a separate body (which is not the case), but by a mental abstraction, separating them off in imagination from the rest, speaking of them as invisible because we do not know them, and speaking of them as peculiarly the Church because they are what all Christians are intended and ought to be, and are all that would remain of the Church Visible, did the Day of Judgment suddenly come. In like manner, speaking politically, we talk of the Clergy as the Church: here is a parallel

instance, in which a part of a body is viewed as the whole; still, who would say that the Laity are one Church by themselves, and the Clergy by themselves another?

In all these senses then, whether we speak of the Church as invisibly blest and succoured, or as triumphant hereafter, or in relation to its true members, who are its substantial support and glory, we may allowably make mention of the Invisible Church. But if we conceive of the Invisible as one, and the Visible as another, as if there were one body without spiritual privileges, of good and bad together, and another of good only, with spiritual privileges, surely we speak without warrant, or rather without leave of Holy Scripture.

The Church of Christ, as Scripture teaches, is a visible body, invested with, or (I may say) existing in invisible privileges. Take the analogy of the human body by way of illustration. Considering man according to his animal nature, I might speak of him as having an organized visible frame sustained by an unseen spirit. When the soul leaves the body it ceases to be a body, it becomes a corpse. So the Church would cease to be the Church, did the Holy Spirit leave it; and it does not exist at all except in the Spirit. Or, consider the figure of a tree, which is our Lord's own instance. A vine has many branches, and they are all nourished by the sap which circulates throughout. There may be dead branches, still they are upon one and the selfsame tree. Were they as numerous as the sound ones, were they a hundred times as many, they would not form a tree by them-

selves. Were all the branches dead, were the stock dead, then it would be a dead tree. But any how, we could never say there were two trees. Such is the Scripture account of the Church, a living body with branches, some dead, some living; as in the text by another figure: "In a great house there are vessels; some to honour, and some to dishonour." Can any account be plainer than this is? Why divide into two, when the only reason for so dividing, viz., the improbability that good and bad should be found together, is superseded, as irrelevant, by our Lord and His Apostles themselves? Very various things are said of the Church; sometimes it is spoken of as glorious and holy, sometimes as abounding in offences and sins. It is natural, perhaps, at first sight, to invent, in consequence, the hypothesis of two Churches, as the Jews have dreamed of two Messiahs; but, I say, our Saviour has implied that it is unnecessary, that these opposite descriptions of it are not really incompatible; and if so, what reason remains for doing violence to the sacred text?

Consider these various descriptions, carefully examine them, and say, why it is not possible to adjust them together in one subject, directly we know that it is lawful to do so? Consider how they were all fulfilled in the case of the Corinthians, which is expressly given in Scripture. For instance, the Church is made up of ranks and offices. "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." It is inhabited by the Holy Ghost: "All these worketh that

one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, though many, are one body; so also is Christ." Its Sacraments are the instruments which the Holy Ghost uses: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Yet, in spite of these precious gifts, the Church consists of bad as well as good; for the Corinthians, though "the temple of the Holy Ghost," are reproved by St. Paul for being "puffed up," "contentious," and "carnal."

Now, in answer to this account of the Church, as one, and not double, it may be objected, that "surely it is impossible that bad men can really have God's grace within them, or that the irreligious or secular can be properly called justified or elect; yet such men are outwardly in the Church, so that there are two Churches any how, an outward and an inward." Or, again, it may be said that "repentance and faith are confessedly necessary in order to enjoy the Christian privileges; those, therefore, who have not these requisites, certainly have not the privileges, that is, are not members of Christ's true Church; from which again it follows, that there certainly are two bodies, whatever words we use." It will be added, perhaps, that "Simon Magus, though he had been baptized, was unregenerate, being addressed by St. Peter as being 'in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.'"[1] On the other hand it may be

[1] Acts viii. 23.

argued, that "there are good men outside the Visible Church, viz., among Dissenters, who, as being good, must necessarily be in the Invisible Church; and thus there certainly are two Churches." On the whole, then, there are these two arguments to prove that the word Church has two distinct meanings in Scripture; first, that there are bad men in the Visible Church; next, that certain good men are out of it:—both being derived from *the actual state of things which we see,* which is supposed to be a legitimate comment upon the words of Scripture.

1. We will first take the objection, that bad men are in the Visible Church; what is this to prove? Let us observe. It is maintained, that "bad men cannot be members of the true Church, therefore, there is a true Church distinct from the Visible Church." But we shall be nearer the truth, if, instead of saying "bad men cannot be members of the true Church," we word it, "bad men cannot be true members of the Church." Does not this meet all that reason requires, yet without leading to the inference that the Church Visible is not the true Church? Again, it is said that "the Visible Church has not the gifts of grace, because wicked men are members of it, who, of course, cannot have them." What! must the Church be without them herself, because she is not able to impart them to wicked men? What reasoning is this? because certain individuals of a body have them not, therefore the body has them not! Surely it is possible that certain members of a body should be debarred, under circumstances, from its privileges; and this we consider to be the case with bad men.

Let us return to the instance of a tree, already used. Is a dead branch part or not part of a tree? You may decide this way or that, but you will never say, because the branch is dead, that therefore the tree has no sap. It is a dead branch of a living tree, not a branch of a dead tree. In like manner, irreligious men are dead members of the one Visible Church, which is living and true, not members of a Church which is dead. Because they are dead, it does not follow that the Visible Church to which they belong is dead also.

Or, consider the parallel of a body politic. Are persons, who are under disabilities, members of it or not? Are convicts? Prisoners are debarred from certain rights, but they are still members of the state, and, after a while, recover what they have forfeited.

The case is the same as regards the Church. Its invisible privileges range throughout it; but there may be, on the part of individuals, obstacles or impediments which suspend *their* enjoyment of them. It is one thing to be admitted into the body, and another thing to enjoy its privileges. While men are impenitent, the grace of the Christian election does not operate in their case. And in proportion to their carelessness and profaneness do they quench the Spirit. Hence it is, that faith is necessary for our justification, as an indispensable condition, where it can be had. Simon Magus, we may securely grant, was profited nothing by his baptism; the font of regeneration was opened upon him, but his heart was closed. The blessing was put into his hand, but he had not that which alone could apprehend and apply it. It was sealed up from him,

and only penitence and faith could unseal it. Therefore St. Peter bids him repent, that he might receive it. He went on further in wickedness, as history informs us, and then, of course, the gift thus attached to him, but not enjoyed, would prove, at the last day, but a cause of heavier condemnation. I do not presume to say that this is the true explanation *of his case*, which is not told us, but as a mode of explaining it, and yet keeping clear of the conclusion, for the sake of which it is usually brought. If there be one such explanation, there may be others.

In like manner, when men fall into sin, *they* lose the light of God's countenance; but why should it be withdrawn from the Holy Church, for *their* individual transgressions?

There was a controversy, in early times, which illustrates still further the foregoing explanation of the difficulty. It was disputed whether the baptism administered by clergy who were heretics, and had been put out of the Church, was valid. And at length it was decided as follows: that the baptism was valid for the primary purpose of baptism, viz., that of admitting into the visible body of Christ, but that the *enjoyment* of its privileges was suspended, while the parties receiving it remained in heretical communion. On coming over to the Church Catholic, they were formally admitted by confirmation, and released from the bond under which they had hitherto lain.

If, then, I am asked what is to be thought of the state of irreligious men in the Church, I answer, that if open sinners, or heretics, or leaders in dissent, be meant,

they are to be put out of it by the competent authority. As to those who are not such, we cannot determine about their real condition, for we cannot see their hearts. Many may seem fair and specious to us, who are really dead in God's sight; and these, of course, cannot possess the gifts of grace any more than Simon Magus. Or they may be lukewarm, unstable, inconsistent; and may thus have forfeited, more or less, the privileges which have graciously been committed to them. But how does all this show that the Visible Church has not the true and spiritual gifts of the Gospel attached to her?

2. Now, to consider the second objection that is urged, viz., that "there are good men external to the Visible Church, therefore there is a second Church, called the Invisible." In answer, I observe, that as every one, who has been duly baptized, is, in one sense, in the Church, even though his sins since have hid God's countenance from him; so, if a man has not been baptized, be he ever so correct and exemplary in his conduct, this does not prove that he has received regeneration, which is the peculiar and invisible gift of the Church. What is Regeneration? It is the gift of a new and spiritual nature; but men have, through God's blessing, obeyed and pleased Him without it. The Israelites were not regenerated; Cornelius, the Centurion, was not regenerated, when his prayers and alms came up before God. No outward conduct, however consistent, can be a criterion, to our mortal judgments, of this unearthly and mysterious privilege. Therefore, when you bring to me the case of religious

Dissenters, I rejoice at hearing of them. If they know no better, God, we trust, will accept them as He did the Shunammite. I wish, with all my heart, they partook the full blessings of the Church; but all my wishing cannot change God's appointments; and His appointment, I say, is this—that the Church Visible should be the minister, and baptism the instrument of Regeneration. But I have said not a word to imply that a man, if he knows no better, may not be exemplary in his generation without it.

So much in answer to this objection; but the same consideration throws light upon the former difficulty also, that of inconsistent men being in the Church. Regeneration, I say, is a new birth, or the giving of a new nature. Now, let it be observed, there is nothing impossible in the thing itself, though we believe it is not so, but nothing impossible in the very *notion* of a regeneration being accorded even to impenitent sinners. I do not say regeneration in its fulness, for that includes in it perfect happiness and holiness, to which it tends from the first; yet regeneration in a true and sufficient sense, in its primary qualities. For the essence of regeneration is the communication of a higher and diviner nature; and sinners may have this gift, though it would be a curse to them, not a blessing. The devils have a nature thus higher and more divine than man, yet they are not preserved thereby from evil.

And if this is the case even with sinners, much more is regeneration conceivable in the instance of children, who have done neither good nor evil. Nor does it all follow, even though they grow up disobedient,

and are a scandal to the Church, that therefore the Church has not conveyed to them a great gift, an initiation into the powers of the world to come.

If, indeed, this gracious privilege ensured religious obedience, then, truly, disobedience in those who have been admitted into the Church would prove that the Church had not conveyed it to them. But, until a man is ready to maintain that the Spirit cannot be "quenched," he has no warrant for saying that it has not been given.

Now, then, after these explanations, let me ask, in what is this whole doctrine concerning the Church, which I have been giving, *inconsistent?* What *difficulty* does it present to force us to reject the plain word of Scripture about it, and to imagine a Visible Church with no privileges at all, and an Invisible Church of real Christians exclusively with them? Surely, nothing but the influence of a human system, acting on us, can make us read Scripture so perversely! and how is it a less violence to deny that the Church which the Apostles set up, and which is, in matter of fact, among us at this day, is (what Scripture says it is) the pillar and ground of the Truth, the Mother of us all, the House of God, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost, the Spouse of Christ, a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, and destined to remain even to the end of the world—how is this a less violent perversion of Scripture truth than theirs, who, when Scripture says that Christ is God, obstinately maintain He is a mere man?

I will notice in conclusion one objection which subtle

minds may make to the statements now set before you. It may be said that the Church has forfeited its early privileges, by allowing itself to remain in a state of sin and disorder which Christ never intended: for instance, "that from time to time there have been great corruptions in it, especially under the ascendancy of the Papal power: that there have been very many scandalous appointments to its highest dignities, that infidels have been bishops, that men have administered baptism or ordination, not believing that grace was imparted in those sacred ordinances, and that, in particular in our own country, heretics and open sinners, whom Christ would have put out of the Church, are suffered, by a sin on the part of the Church, to remain within it unrebuked, uncondemned." This is what is sometimes said; and I confess, had we not Scripture to consult, it would be a very specious argument against the Church's present power, now at the distance of eighteen hundred years from the Apostles. It would certainly seem as if, the conditions not having been fully observed on which that power was granted, it was forfeited. But here the case of the Jewish Church affords us the consoling certainty, that God does not so visit, even though He might, and that His gifts and calling "are without repentance."[1] Christ's Church cannot be in a worse condition than that of Israel when He visited it in the flesh; yet He expressly assures us that in His day "the Scribes and Pharisees," wicked men as they were, "sat in Moses' seat," and were to be obeyed in what they taught; and we find, in accordance with this informa-

[1] Rom. xi. 29.

tion, that Caiaphas, "because he was the high priest," had the gift of prophecy—had it, though he did not know he had it, nay, in spite of his being one of the foremost in accomplishing our Lord's crucifixion. Surely, then, we may infer, that, however fallen the Church now is from what it once was, however unconscious of its power, it still has the gift, as of old time, to convey and withdraw the Christian privileges, "to bind and to loose," to consecrate, to bless, to teach the Truth in all necessary things, to rule, and to prevail.

But if these things be so, if the Church Visible really has invisible privileges, what must we think, my brethren, of the general spirit of this day, which looks upon the Church as but a civil institution, a creation and a portion of the State? What shall be thought of the notion that it depends upon the breath of princes, or upon the enactments of human law? What, again, shall be thought of those who fiercely and rancorously oppose and revile what is really an Ordinance of God, and the place where His honour dwelleth? Even to the Jewish priesthood after the blood of the Redeemer was upon it, even to it St. Paul deferred, signifying that God's high priest was not to be reviled; and if so, surely much less the rulers of a branch of the Church, which, whatever have been its sins in times past, yet is surely innocent (as we humbly and fervently trust) of any inexpiable crime. Moreover, what an unworthy part they act, who, knowing and confessing the real claims of the Church, yet allow them to be lightly treated and forgotten, without utter-

ing a word in their behalf; who from secular policy, or other insufficient reason, bear to hear our spiritual rulers treated as mere civil functionaries, without instructing, or protesting against, or foregoing intimacy with those who despise them, nay even co-operating with them cordially, as if they could serve two masters, Christ and the world! And how melancholy is the general spectacle in this day of ignorance, doubt, perplexity, misbelief, perverseness, on the subject of this great doctrine, to say nothing of the jealousy, hatred, and unbelieving spirit with which the Church is regarded! Surely, thus much we are forced to grant, that, be the privileges vested in the Church what they may, yet, at present, they are, as to their full fruits, suspended in our branch of it by our present want of faith; nor can we expect that the glories of Christ's Kingdom will again be manifested in it, till we repent, confess "our offences and the offences of our forefathers;" and, instead of trusting to an arm of flesh, claim for the Church what God has given it, for Christ's sake, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear."

SERMON XVII.

THE VISIBLE CHURCH AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITH.

HEB. xii. 1.

"*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*"

THE warning and consolation given by the Apostle to the Hebrews, amid their sufferings for the truth's sake, were as follows: they were to guard against unbelief, that easily-besetting sin under temptation, chiefly, and above all, by "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith;" but, besides this, a secondary stay was added. So glorious and holy is our Lord, though viewed in His human nature, so perfect when He was tempted, so heavenly even upon earth, that sinners, such as we are, cannot endure the sight of Him at first. Like the blessed Apostle in the book of Revelation, we "fall at His feet as dead." So, in mercy to us, without withdrawing His presence, He has included within it, His Saints and Angels, a great company of created beings, nay, of those who once were sinners, and subjects of His kingdom upon earth; that

thus we may be encouraged by the example of others before us to look unto Him and live. St. Paul, in the foregoing chapter, enumerates many of the Ancient Saints who had run the course of faith; and then he says in the text, "Wherefore, let us also, being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." And presently he speaks in still more high and glowing language of the Christian Church, that august assemblage which Christ had formed of all that was holy in heaven and earth. "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant."

And much is needed, in every age, as a remedy against unbelief, that support which St. Paul suggested to the Hebrews in persecution, the vision of the Saints of God, and of the Kingdom of Heaven. Much is it needed, in every age, by those who have set their hearts to serve God, because they are few, and faint for company. We are told, expressly, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." On the other hand, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."[1] Alas! is it not discouragement enough to walk in a path of self-denial, to combat

[1] Matt. vii. 13, 14.

our natural lusts and high imaginations, to have the war of the flesh, that the war with the world must be added to it? Is it not enough to be pilgrims and soldiers all our days, but we must hear the mutual greetings, and exulting voices of those who choose the way of death, and must walk not only in pain but in solitude? Where is the blessing upon the righteous, where the joy of faith, the comfort of love, the triumph of self-mastery, in such dreariness and desolateness? Who are to sympathize with us in our joys and sorrows, who are to spur us on by the example of their own success? St. Paul answers us—the cloud of witnesses of former days. Let us then consider our need and its remedy.

1. Certainly it cannot be denied that, if we surrender our hearts to Christ and obey God, we shall be in the number of the few. So it has been in every age, so it will be to the end of time. It is hard, indeed, to find a man who gives himself up honestly to his Saviour. In spite of all the mercies poured upon us, yet in one way or other we are in danger of being betrayed by our own hearts, and taking up with a pretence of religion instead of the substance. Hence, in a country called Christian, the many live to the world. Nay, it would seem that as Christianity spreads, its fruit becomes less; or, at least, does not increase with its growth. It seems (some have said) as if a certain portion of truth were in the world, a certain number of the elect in the Church, and, as you increased its territory, you scattered this remnant to and fro, and made them seem fewer, and made them feel more desolate.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves;"[1] what our Lord addressed to His Apostles is fulfilled to this day in all those who obey Him. They are sprinkled up and down the world; they are separated the one from the other, they are bid quit each other's dear society, and sent afar off to those who are differently minded. Their choice of profession and employment is not their own. Outward circumstances, over which they have no control, determine their line of life; accidents bring them to this place or that place, not knowing whither they go; not knowing the persons to whom they unite themselves, they find, almost blindly, their home and their company. And in this, moreover, differing from the Apostles, and very painfully; that the Apostles knew each other, and could communicate one with another, and could form, nay, were bound to form one body; but now, those honest and true hearts, in which the good seed has profitably fallen, do not even know each other; nay, even when they think they can single out their fellows, yet are they not allowed to form a separate society with them.

They do not know each other; they do not know themselves; they do not dare take to themselves the future titles of God's elect, though they be really reserved for them; and the nearer they are towards heaven, so much the more lowly do they think of themselves. "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof,"[2] was the language of him who had greater faith than any in Israel. Doubtless, they do not know their own blessedness, nor can they single

[1] Matt. x. 16. [2] Matt. viii. 8.

out those who are their fellows in blessedness. God alone sees the heart; now and then, as they walk their way, they see glimpses of God's work in others; they take hold of them awhile in the dark, but soon lose them; they hear their voices, but cannot find them. Some few, indeed, are revealed to them in a measure. Among those with whom their lot is cast, whom they see continually, one or two, perhaps, are given them to rejoice in, but not many even of these. For so it has pleased the Dresser of the Vineyard, who seems to have purposed that His own should not grow too thick together; and if they seem to do so, He prunes His vine, that, seeming to bear less, it may bear better. He plucks off some of the promise of the vintage; and they who are left, mourn over their brethren whom God has taken to Himself, not understanding that it is no strange providence, but the very rule of His government, to leave His servants few and solitary.

And, even when they know each other (as far as man can know man), still, as I have said, they may not form an exclusive communion together. Of course, every one will naturally live most with those whom he likes most; but it is one thing to have a preference, and quite another to draw a line of exclusion, and to form a select company within the Church. The Visible Church of God is that one only company which Christians know as yet; it was set up at Pentecost, with the Apostles for founders, their successors for rulers, and all professing Christian people for members. In this Visible Church the Church Invisible is gradually moulded and matured. It is formed slowly and vari-

ously by the Blessed Spirit of God, in the instance of this man and that, who belong to the general body. But all these blessed fulfilments of God's grace are as yet but parts of the Visible Church; they grow from it; they depend upon it; they do not hang upon each other; they do not form a body together; there is no Invisible Church yet formed; it is but a name as yet; a name given to those who are hidden, and known to God only, and as yet but half formed, the unripe and gradually ripening fruit which grows on the stem of the Church Visible. As well might we attempt to foretell the blossoms which will at length turn to account and ripen for the gathering, and then counting up all these and joining them together in our minds, call them by the name of a tree, as attempt now to associate in one the true elect of God. They are scattered about amid the leaves of that Mystical Vine which is seen, and receive their nurture from its trunk and branches. They live on its Sacraments and its Ministry; they gain light and salvation from its rites and ordinances; they communicate with each other through it; they obey its rulers; they walk together with its members; they do not dare to judge of this man or that man, on their right hand or their left, whether or not he is absolutely of the number of those who shall be saved; they accept all as their brethren in Christ, as partakers of the same general promises, who have not openly cast off Christ—as really brethren, till death comes, as those are who fulfil their calling most strictly.

Yet, at the same time, while in faith they love those,

all around them, who are called by Christ's name, and forbear to judge about their real state in God's sight, they cannot but see much in many of them to hurt and offend them; they cannot but feel, most painfully, the presence of that worldly atmosphere which, however originating, encircles them; they feel the suffocation of those vapours in which the many are content to remain; and while they cannot trace the evil to its real authors individually, they are sure that it is an evil to be avoided and pointed out, and originating somewhere or other in the Church. Hence, in their spheres, whether high or low, the faithful few are witnesses; they are witnesses for God and Christ, in their lives, and by their protestations, without judging others, or exalting themselves. They are witnesses in various degrees, to various persons, more or less, as each needs it—differing from the multitude variously, as each of that multitude, before whom they witness, is better or worse, and as they themselves are more or less advanced in the truth; still, on the whole, they are witnesses, as light witnesses against darkness by the contrast;—giving good and receiving back evil; receiving back on themselves the contempt, the ridicule, and the opposition of the world, mixed, indeed, with some praise and reverence, reverence which does not last long, but soon becomes fear and hatred. And hence it is that religious men need some consolation to support them, which the Visible Church seems, at first sight, not to supply, when the overflowings of ungodliness make them afraid.

2. Now then, secondly, in such circumstances what

shall we say? Are they but solitary witnesses, each in his place? Is the Church which they see really no consolation to them at all, except as contemplated by faith in respect of its invisible gifts? or does it, after all, really afford them some sensible stay, a vision of Heaven, of peace and purity, antagonist to the world that now is, in spite of the evil which abounds in it, and overlays it? Through God's great mercy, it is actually, in no small degree, a present and a sensible consolation, as I proceed to show.

In truth, do what he will, Satan cannot quench or darken the light of the Church. He may incrust it with his own evil creations, but even opaque bodies transmit rays, and Truth shines with its own heavenly lustre, though "under a bushel." The Holy Spirit has vouchsafed to take up His abode in the Church, and the Church will ever bear, on its front, the visible signs of its hidden privilege. Viewed at a little distance, its whole surface will be illuminated, though the light really streams from apertures which might be numbered. The scattered witnesses thus become, in the language of the text, "a cloud," like the Milky Way in the heavens.

We have, in Scripture, the records of those who lived and died by faith in the old time, and nothing can deprive us of them. The strength of Satan lies in his being seen to have the many on his side; but, when we read the Bible, this argument loses its hold over us. There we find that we are not solitary; that others, before us, have been in our very condition, have had our feelings, undergone our trials, and laboured for the

prize which we are seeking. Nothing more elevates the mind than the consciousness of being one of a great and victorious company. Does not the soldier exult in his commander, and consider his triumph as his own? He is but one, yet he identifies himself with the army, and the cause in which he serves, and dwells upon the thought of victories, and those who win them, more than on casual losses and defeats. Does not a native of a powerful country feel it a joy and boast to be so? Do we not hear men glory in being born Englishmen? And they go to and fro, gazing on the works of their own days, and the monuments of their forefathers, and say to themselves that their race is a noble one. Much more fully, much more reasonably is this the boast of a Christian, and without aught of arrogant or carnal feeling. He knows, from God's Word, that he is "citizen of no mean city." He feels that his is no upstart line, but very ancient; Almighty God having purposed to bring many sons unto glory through His Son, and begetting them again, in their separate ages, to do Him service. He is one of a host, and all those blessed Saints he reads of are his brethren in the faith. He finds, in the history of the past, a peculiar kind of consolation, counteracting the influence of the world that is seen. He cannot tell who the Saints are now on earth; those yet unborn are known to God only; but the Saints of former times are sealed for heaven and are in their degree revealed to him. The spirits of the just made perfect encourage him to follow them. This is why it is a Christian's characteristic to look back on former times. The man of this world lives in

the present, or speculates about the future; but faith rests upon the past and is content. It makes the past the mirror of the future. It recounts the list of faithful servants of God, to whom St. Paul refers in the text, and no longer feels sad as if it were alone. Abraham and the Patriarchs, Moses, Samuel, and the Prophets, David and the kings who walked in his steps, these are the Christian's forefathers. By degrees he learns to have them as familiar images before his mind, to unite his cause with theirs, and, since their history comforts him, to defend them in his own day. Hence he feels jealous for their honour, and when they are attacked he answers eagerly, so as to surprise those who are contented with things as they are; but, truly, he is too grateful, too affectionate, too much interested in the matter, to be complimentary and generous towards their assailants. He had rather the present day should be proved captious, than a former day mistaken.

But to return: what a world of sympathy and comfort is thus opened to us in the Communion of Saints! The heathen, who sought truth most earnestly, fainted for want of companions; every one stood by himself. They were tempted to think that all their best feelings were but an empty name, and that it mattered not whether they served God or disobeyed Him. But Christ has "gathered together the children of God that were scattered abroad," and brought them near to each other in every time and place. Are we young, and in temptation or trial? we cannot be in worse circumstances than Joseph. Are we in sickness? Job will surpass us in sufferings as in patience. Are we in perplexities and

anxieties, with conflicting duties and a bewildered mind, having to please unkind superiors, yet without offending God; so grievous a trial as David's we cannot have, when Saul persecuted him. Is it our duty to witness for the truth among sinners? No Christian can at this day be so hardly circumstanced as Jeremiah. Have we domestic trials? Job, Jacob, and David, were afflicted in their children. It is easy indeed to say all this, and many a man may hear it said, and not feel moved by it, and conceive it is a mere matter of words, easy and fitting indeed to say, but a cold consolation in actual suffering. And I will own that a man cannot profit by these considerations all at once. A man, who has never thought of the history of the Saints, will gain little benefit from it on first taking up the subject when he comes into trouble. He will turn from it disappointed. He may say, "My pain or my trial is not the less because another had it a thousand years since." But the consolation in question comes not in the way of argument but by habit. A tedious journey seems shorter when gone in company, yet, be the travellers many or few, each goes over the same ground.

Such is the Christian's feeling towards all Saints, but it is especially excited by the Church of Christ and by all that belong to it. For what is that Church but a pledge and proof of God's never-dying love and power from age to age? He set it up in mercy to mankind, and its presence among us is a proof that in spite of our sins He has not yet forsaken us;—"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." He set it up on the foundation of His Twelve Apostles, and promised that the gates of hell

should not prevail against it; and its presence among us is a proof of His power. He set it up to succeed to the four monster kingdoms which then were; and it lived to see those kingdoms of the earth crumble into dust and come to nought. It lived to see society new formed upon the model of the governments which last to this day. It lives still, and it is older than them all. Much and rightly as we reverence old lineage, noble birth, and illustrious ancestry, yet the royal dynasty of the Apostles is far older than all the kingly families which are now on the earth. Every Bishop of the Church whom we behold, is a lineal descendant of St. Peter and St. Paul after the order of a spiritual birth; —a noble thought, if we could realize it! True it is that at various times the Bishops have forgotten their high rank and acted unworthily of it. So have kings and princes, yet noble they were by blood in spite of their personal errors, and the line of their family is not broken or degraded thereby. And in like manner, true though it be that the descendants of the Apostles have before now lived to this world, have fancied themselves of this world, have thought their office secular and civil, or if religious, yet at least "of men and by man," not "by Jesus Christ," have judged it much to have riches, or to sit in high places, or to have rank and consideration, or to have the fame of letters, or to be king's counsellors, or to live in courts—yet, granting the utmost, for all this they are not the less inspiring an object to a believing mind, which sees in each of them the earnest of His promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He said, He would be with His

Church: He has continued it alive to this day. He has continued the line of His Apostles onwards through every age and all troubles and perils of the world. Here then, surely, is somewhat of encouragement for us amid our loneliness and weakness. The presence of every Bishop suggests a long history of conflicts and trials, sufferings and victories, hopes and fears, through many centuries. His presence at this day is the fruit of them all. He is the living monument of those who are dead. He is the promise of a bold fight and a good confession and a cheerful martyrdom now, if needful, as was instanced in those of old time. We see their figures on our walls, and their tombs are under our feet; and we trust, nay, we are sure, that God will be to us in our day what He was to them. In the words of the Psalmist, "The Lord hath been mindful of us; He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron." [1]

And more especially does the sight of our living Apostles bring before our thoughts the more favoured of their line, who, at different times, have fought the good fight of faith valiantly and gloriously. Blessed be God, He has given us to know them as if we had lived in their day and enjoyed their pattern and instructions. Alas! in spite of the variety of books now circulated among all classes of the community, how little is known about the Saints of past times! How is this? has Christ's Church failed in any age? or have His witnesses betrayed their trust? are they not our bone and our flesh? Have they not partaken the same spiritual

[1] Psalm cxv. 12.

food as ourselves and the same spiritual drink, used the same prayers, and confessed the same creed? If a man merely looks into the Prayer-Book, he will meet there with names, about which, perhaps, he knows and cares nothing at all. A prayer we read daily is called the prayer of St. Chrysostom; a creed is called the Creed of St. Athanasius; another creed is called the Nicene Creed; in the Articles we read of St. Augustine and St. Jerome; in the Homilies of many other such besides. What do these names mean? Sad it is, you have no heart to inquire after or celebrate those who are fellow-citizens with you, and your great benefactors! Men of this world spread each other's fame—they vaunt loudly;—you see in every street the names and the statues of the children of men, you hear of their exploits in speeches and histories; yet you care not to know concerning those to whom you are indebted for the light of Gospel truth. Truly they were in their day men of God; they were rulers and teachers in the Church; they had received by succession of hands the power first given to the Apostles and now to us. They laboured and suffered and fainted not, and their writings remain to this day. Now a person who cultivates this thought, finds therein, through God's mercy, great encouragement. Say he is alone, his faith counted a dream, and his efforts to do good a folly, what then? He knows there have been times when his opinions were those of the revered and influential, and the opinions now in repute only not reprobated because they were not heard of. He knows that present opinions are the accident of the day, and that they

will fall as they have risen. They will surely fall even though at a distant date! He labours for that time; he labours for five hundred years to come. He can bear in faith to wait five hundred years, to wait for an era long, long after he has mouldered into dust. The Apostles lived eighteen hundred years since; and as far as the Christian looks back, so far can he afford to look forward. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, from first to last.

I referred just now to our Sacred Services; these, again, may be made to furnish a support to our faith and hope. He who comes to Church to worship God, be he high or low, enters into that heavenly world of Saints of which I have been speaking. For in the Services of worship we elicit and realize the invisible. I know, indeed, that Christ is then especially present, and vouchsafes to bless us; but I am speaking all along of the help given to us by sensible objects, and, even in this lower view, doubtless much is done for us in the course of divine worship. We read from the Bible of the Saints who have gone before us, and we make mention of them in our prayers. We thank God for them, we praise God with them, we pray God to visit us in mercy as He visited them. And every earthly thought or principle is excluded. The world no longer rules as it does abroad; no longer teaches, praises, blames, scoffs, wonders, according to its own false standard. It is merely spoken of as one of the three great enemies whom we are sworn to resist; it holds its proper place; and its doom is confidently predicted, the final victory of the Church over it. And,

further, it is much more impressive to hear and to see, than to read in a book. When we read the Bible and religious books in private, there is great comfort; but our minds are commonly more roused and encouraged in Church, when we see those great truths displayed and represented which Scripture speaks of. There we see "Jesus Christ, evidently set forth, crucified among us." The ordinances which we behold, force the unseen truth upon our senses. The very disposition of the building, the subdued light, the aisles, the Altar, with its pious adornments, are figures of things unseen, and stimulate our fainting faith. We seem to see the heavenly courts, with Angels chanting, and Apostles and Prophets listening, as we read their writings in due course. And thus, even attendance on a Sunday may, through God's mercy, avail even in the case of those who have not given themselves up to Him—not to their salvation (for no one can be saved by one or two observances merely, or without a life of faith), but so far as to break in upon their dream of sin, and give them thoughts and notions which may be the germ of future good. Even to those, I say, who live to the world, the mere Sunday attendance at Church is a continual memento on their conscience, giving them a glimpse of things unseen, and rescuing them in a measure from the servitude of Mammon or of Belial. And therefore it is, that Satan's first attempt, when he would ruin a soul, is to prevail upon him to desecrate the Lord's Day. And if such is the effect of coming to Church once a week, even to an undecided or carnal mind, how much more impressive and invigorating are

the Services to serious men who come daily or frequently! Surely such attendance is a safeguard, such as amulets were said to be, a small thing to all appearance, but effectual. I say it with confidence, he who observes it, will grow in time a different man from what he was, God working in him. His heart will be more heavenly and aspiring; the world will lie under his feet; he will be proof against its opinions, threats, blandishments, ridicule. His very mode of viewing things, his very voice, his manner, gait, and countenance, will speak of Heaven to those who know him well, though the many see nothing in him.

The many understand him not, and even in St. Paul or St. John would see but ordinary men. Yet at times such a one will speak effectually even to the many. In seasons of unusual distress or alarm, when men's minds faint for fear, then he will have a natural power over the world, and will seem to speak, not as an individual, but as if in him was concentrated all the virtue and the grace of those many Saints who have been his life-long companions. He has lived with those who are dead, and he will seem to the world as one coming from the dead, speaking in the name of the dead, using the language of souls dead to things that are seen, revealing the mysteries of the heavenly world, and aweing and controlling those who are wedded to this. What slight account did the centurion and the crew make of St. Paul, till a tempest had long time "lain on them," and "all hope that they should be saved was then taken away!" But then, though he had done no miracle, "he stood forth in the midst," exhorted and

encouraged them, bade them take meat, acted as their priest, giving thanks to God and breaking bread in the presence of them all, and so made them "of good cheer." Such is the gift, deeply lodged and displayed at times, of those who have ascended into the third heaven. One living Saint, though there be but one, is a pledge of the whole Church Invisible. Let this thought console us as it ought to do; let it have its full influence in us and possess us. Let us "lift up our hearts," let us, "lift them up unto the Lord!"

SERMON XVIII.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

2 Cor. iii. 18.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

MOSES prayed for this one thing, that he might "see God's glory;" and he was allowed to behold it in such measure, that when he came down from the Mount, "the skin of his face shone," so that the people "were afraid to come nigh him." Only to him was this privilege vouchsafed in this intimate way, and that but once; but a promise was given, that at some future time it should be extended to the whole earth. God said to him, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," that glory which the Israelites had seen in glimpses and had profaned. Afterwards the prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk foretold, in like manner, that the earth should be filled with the Lord's glory and the knowledge of it. When Christ came, these promises were fulfilled, for "we

beheld His glory," St. John says, "the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father."[1]

In the chapter which ends with the text, St. Paul contrasts the shadows and earnests under the Law, of "the glory that should follow" Christ's coming, with that glory itself. He says that he and his brother Apostles are "not as Moses, who put a veil over his face." At length the glory of God in full measure was the privilege and birthright of all believers, who now, "in the unveiled face of Christ their Saviour, beheld the reflection of the Lord's glory," and were "changed into His likeness from one measure of glory to another." Our Saviour's words in His last prayer for His Apostles, and for all His disciples as included under them, convey to us the same gracious truth. He says, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them."[2]

This glorious Dispensation, under which the Church now exists, is called by St. Paul, in the same chapter, "the ministration of the Spirit;" and again in the text, we are said to be changed into the glorious image of Christ, "by the Spirit of the Lord."

And further, the Church, as being thus honoured and exalted by the presence of the Spirit of Christ, is called "the Kingdom of God," "the Kingdom of Heaven;" as, for instance, by our Lord Himself. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand:" "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."[3]

[1] Exod. xxxiv. 30; Numb. xiv. 21; Isa. xi. 9; Hab. ii. 14; John i. 14.

[2] John xvii. 22.

[3] Matt. x. 7; John iii. 5.

I propose now to make some remarks on this peculiar gift of the Gospel Dispensation, which, as in the foregoing passages, is spoken of as the gift of "the Spirit," the gift of "glory," and through which the Church has become what it was not before, the Kingdom of Heaven.

And here, before entering upon the subject, I would observe, that as there is a sense in which the grant of glory was made even under the Law, viz., in its miracles (as when the Israelites are condemned for having "seen the glory of the Lord and His miracles," and yet "not having hearkened to His voice"[1]), so in another point of view it belongs exclusively to the promised blessedness hereafter. Still there is a peculiar and sufficient sense in which it is ascribed to the Christian Church, and what this is, is the question now before us.

1. In the first place, some insight is given into the force of the word "glory," as our present privilege, by considering the meaning of the title "Kingdom of Heaven," which, as has been just observed, has also belonged to the Church since Christ came. The Church is called by this name as being the court and domain of Almighty God, who retreated from the earth, as far as His kingly presence was concerned, when man fell. Not that He left Himself without witness in any age, but even in His most gracious manifestations, still He conducted Himself as if in an enemy's country, "as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night."[2] But when Christ had reconciled Him to His fallen creatures, He returned according to the prophecy, "I will dwell in them, and

[1] Numb. xiv. 22. [2] Jer. xiv. 8.

walk in them; I will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore."[1] From that time there has really been a heaven upon earth, in fulfilment of Jacob's vision. Thenceforth the Church was not a carnal ordinance, made of perishable materials, like the Jewish Tabernacle, which had been a type of the Dispensation to which it belonged. It became "a kingdom which cannot be moved," being sweetened, purified, and spiritualized by the pouring out of Christ's blood in it. It became once more an integral part of that unseen, but really existing world, of which "the Lord is the everlasting Light;" and it had fellowship with its blessed inhabitants. St. Paul thus describes it in his epistle to the Hebrews: "Ye are come to Mount Sion;" to the true "mountain of the Lord's House," of which the earthly Sion was a type; "and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" that is, as he elsewhere calls it, "the Jerusalem that is above," or, as he speaks in another place, "our citizenship is in heaven;" "and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the festive concourse and Church of the First-born enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the perfected Just, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."[2]

Since then the Christian Church is a Heaven upon earth, it is not surprising that in some sense or other its distinguishing privilege or gift should be glory, for this is the one attribute which we ever attach to our notion of Heaven itself, according to the Scripture intimations

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 16; Ezek. xxxvii. 26. [2] Heb. xii. 22–24.

concerning it. The glory here may be conceived of by considering what we believe of the glory hereafter.

2. Next, if we consider the variety and dignity of the gifts ministered by the Spirit, we shall, perhaps, discern in a measure, why our state under the Gospel is called a state of glory. It is not uncommon, in the present day, to divide the works of the Holy Ghost in the Church into two kinds, miraculous and moral. By *miraculous* are meant such as He manifested in the first ages of the Gospel, marvels out of the course of nature, addressed to our senses; such as the power of healing, of raising the dead, and the like; or, again, such as speaking with tongues or prophecy. On the other hand, by *moral* operations or influences are meant such as act upon our minds, and enable us to be what we otherwise could not be, holy and accepted in all branches of the Christian character; in a word, all such as issue in Sanctification, as it is called. These distinct works of the Holy Spirit, viewed in their effects, are commonly called extraordinary and ordinary, or *gifts* and *graces;* and it is usual to say, that gifts have ceased, and graces alone remain to us, and hence, to limit the present "ministration of the Spirit" to certain influences on our moral nature, to the office of changing, renewing, purifying the heart and mind, implanting a good will, imparting knowledge of our duty and power to do it, and cultivating and maturing within us all right desires and habits, and leading us to all holy works. Now, all these influences and operations certainly do belong to the "ministration of the Spirit;" but in what appropriate sense can any effects wrought

in us be called "glory?" Add to them the miracles which now have ceased, and you will indeed gain a more intelligible meaning of the word, but not even then any meaning peculiar to the Gospel. The Jewish Church was gifted by a more abiding superhuman presence than the Christian, and with as overpowering miracles, yet it did not possess this privilege of glory. Again, its patriarchs and teachers rose to degrees of sanctification quite as much above our power of measuring them as those attained by Apostles and Martyrs under the Gospel; nor, to all human appearance, is the actual sanctification of the mass of Christians more true or complete than was that of the Jews: how then are we in a state of glory, and the Jewish Church not? Granting then that the gift of the Spirit mentioned in Scripture includes in it both the miracles of the first ages and the influences of grace; granting also that the sanctifying grace bestowed on each Christian is given with far greater fulness, variety, and power, than it was vouchsafed to the Jews (whether it be eventually quenched or not); granting, too, that holiness is really the characteristic of that gift which the Holy Spirit ministers now, as miracles were its outward manifestation in the first ages; still all this is not a sufficient account of it; it is not equivalent to our great Gospel privilege, which is something deeper, wider, and more mysterious, though including both miracles and graces.

In truth, the Holy Ghost has taken up His abode in the Church in a variety of gifts, as a sevenfold Spirit. For instance, is the gift of the body's immortality miraculous or moral? Neither, in the common sense of the

words; yet it is a gift bestowed on us in this life, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, according to the texts, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;" and "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His indwelling Spirit."[1] Again, is justification, or the application of Christ's merits to the soul, moral or miraculous? Neither; yet we are told that we are "washed, hallowed, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."[2] Or is the gift of the Holy Ghost in Ordination miraculous or moral? It is neither the one nor the other, but a supernatural power of ministering effectually in holy things. Once more, is communion with Christ miraculous or moral? On the contrary, it is a real but mysterious union of nature with Him, according to the text, "we are members of His body, from His flesh, and from His bones."[3] Such reflections as these are calculated, perhaps, to give us somewhat of a deeper view than is ordinarily admitted, of the character of that Gift which attends on the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and which is called the gift of glory. I do not say that anything that has been just said has been sufficient to define it; rather I would maintain, that it cannot be defined. It cannot be limited; it cannot be divided, and exhausted by a division. This is the very faultiness of the division into miraculous and moral, useful as this may be for particular purposes, that it professes to embrace what is in fact incomprehensible and unfathomable. I would fain keep from the same

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 19; Rom. viii. 11. [2] 1 Cor. vi. 11.
[3] 2 Pet. i. 4; Eph. v. 30.

mistake; and the instances already given may serve this purpose, enlarging our view without bounding it. The gift is denoted in Scripture by the vague and mysterious term "glory;" and all the descriptions we can give of it can only, and should only, run out into a mystery.

3. Perhaps, however, it may be questioned, whether the gift of the Spirit, now possessed by us, is really called by this name; with a view of making this quite clear, I will here recite a number of passages in order, in addition to those with which I began; and while I do so, I would have you observe in what close and continual connection the "Spirit," and "glory," and "heaven," occur.

"The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect."

"According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

"Whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. . . . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. . . . . The natural man receiveth not the things

of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

[I pray] "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . . . Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. . . . . In whom [Christ] ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

[I pray] "that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,

and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"It is impossible for those who were once illuminated, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."[1]

I would have you pay particular attention to this last passage, which, in speaking of those who thwart God's grace, runs through the various characteristics or titles of that glory which they forfeit:—illumination, the heavenly gift, the Holy Ghost, the Divine Word, the powers of the world to come; which all mean the same thing, viewed in different lights, viz., that unspeakable Gospel privilege, which is an earnest and portion of heavenly glory, of the holiness and blessedness of Angels—a present entrance into the next world, opened upon our souls through participation of the Word Incarnate, ministered to us by the Holy Ghost.

Such is the mysterious state in which Christians stand, if it be right to enlarge upon it. They are in

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 14; v. 10; 2 Pet. i. 3; Rom. viii. 30; 1 Cor. ii. 7, 9, 14; Eph. i. 3, 17–20; ii. 4–6, 18, 22; iii. 16–19; v. 25–27; Heb. vi. 4–6.

Heaven, in the world of spirits, and are placed in the way of all manner of invisible influences. "Their conversation is in heaven;" they live among Angels, and are within reach (as I may say) of the Saints departed. They are ministers round the throne of their reconciled Father, "kings and priests unto God," having their robes washed in the Lamb's blood, and being consecrated as temples of the Holy Ghost. And this being so, we have some insight into the meaning of St. Paul's anxiety that his brethren should understand "the breadth and length," "the riches" of the glorious inheritance which they enjoyed, and of his forcible declaration, on the other hand, that "the natural man" could not "discern" it.

If we now recur to our Saviour's words already cited, we shall find that all that the Apostles have told us in their Epistles is but an expansion of two short sentences of His: "Except a man be born of water and of *the Spirit*, he cannot enter into, or (as it is said just before) see the *Kingdom of God*." "The *glory* which Thou gavest me, I have given them."[1] On these texts I make the following additional remarks:—When Nicodemus doubted about our Lord's declaration, that a birth through the Spirit was the entrance into His kingdom, He said, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to Heaven, but He that came down from Heaven, even the Son of man *which is in Heaven*." In these words our Lord plainly discloses that in some mysterious way

[1] John iii. 5; xvii. 22.

He, the Son of man, was really in Heaven, even while, by human eyes, He was seen to be on earth. His discourse seems to run thus:—"Are you offended at the doctrine of the new birth of the soul into the kingdom of God? High as it is, it is but an earthly truth compared with others I, as coming from Heaven, could disclose. It is mysterious how regenerate man should be a citizen of a heavenly kingdom, but I Myself, who speak, am at this moment in Heaven too, even in this My human nature." Thus the greater Mystery of the Incarnation is made to envelope and pledge to us the mystery of the new birth. As He was in Heaven in an ineffable sense, even "in the days of His flesh," so are we, in our degree; according to the words of His prayer, that His disciples might "all be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us."[1]

But He was pleased to reveal this high truth more explicitly on a subsequent occasion; I mean in His Transfiguration. To many persons this portion of the Sacred History may have appeared without object or meaning. It was, in one sense, a miracle; yet it had no beneficent purpose or lasting consequence, as is usual with our Lord's miracles, and it took place in private. But, surely, it is of a doctrinal nature, being nothing less than a figurative exhibition of the blessed truth contained in the texts under review, a vision of the glorious Kingdom which He set up on the earth on His coming. He said to His Apostles, "I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not

[1] John xvii. 21.

taste of death till they *see the Kingdom of God.*" Then, "after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. . . . . And behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory. . . . . But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, *they saw His glory.*"[1] Such is the Kingdom of God; Christ the centre of it, His glory the light of it, the Just made perfect His companions, and the Apostles His witnesses to their brethren. It realizes what the ancient Saints saw by glimpses—Jacob at Bethel, Moses on Sinai.

Such, then, being the especial glory and "dreadfulness" which attaches to the Christian Church, it may be asked, how far the gift is also imparted to every individual member of it? It is imparted to every member on his Baptism; as may plainly be inferred from our Lord's words, who, in His discourse with Nicodemus, makes a birth through the Spirit, which He also declares is wrought by Baptism, to be the *only* means of entering into His Kingdom; so that, unless a man is thus "born of water and of the Spirit," he is in no sense a member of His Kingdom at all. By this new birth the Divine Shechinah is set up within him, pervading soul and body, separating him really,

[1] Matt. xvii. 1, &c.; Luke ix. 27, &c.; cf. John i. 14; 2 Pet. i. 17.

not only in name, from those who are not Christians, raising him in the scale of being, drawing and fostering into life whatever remains in him of a higher nature, and imparting to him, in due season and measure, its own surpassing and heavenly virtue. Thus, while he carefully cherishes the Gift, he is, in the words of the text, "changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." On the other hand, if the Gift be resisted, it gradually withdraws its presence, and being thwarted in its chief end, the sanctification of our nature, is forfeited as regards its other benefits also. Such seems to be the rule on which the Almighty Giver acts; and, could we see the souls of men, doubtless we should see them after this manner: infants just baptized bright as the Cherubim, as flames of fire rising heavenward in sacrifice to God; then as they passed from childhood to man's estate, the light within them fading or strengthening as the case may be; while of grown men the multitude, alas! might show but fearful tokens that the Lord had once been among them, only here and there some scattered witnesses for Christ remaining, and they, too, seamed all over with the scars of sin.

To conclude. It were well if the views I have been setting before you, which in the main are, I trust, those of the Church Catholic from the beginning, were more understood and received among us. They would, under God's blessing, put a stop to much of the enthusiasm which prevails on all sides, while they might tend to dispel those cold and ordinary notions of religion which are the opposite extreme. Till we

understand that the gifts of grace are unseen, supernatural, and mysterious, we have but a choice between explaining away the high and glowing expressions of Scripture, or giving them that rash, irreverent, and self-exalting interpretation, which is one of the chief errors of this time. Men of awakened and sensitive minds, knowing from Scripture that the gift of the Holy Ghost is something great and unearthly, dissatisfied with the meagre conceptions of the many, yet not knowing where to look for what they need, are led to place the life of a Christian, which "is hid with Christ in God," in a sort of religious ecstasy, in a high-wrought sensibility on sacred subjects, in impassioned thoughts, a soft and languid tone of feeling, and an unnatural profession of all this in conversation. And further, from the same cause, their ignorance of the *supernatural* character of the Heavenly Gift, they attempt to measure it in each other by its sensible effects, and account none to be Christians but those whom they suppose they can ascertain to be such, by their profession, language, and carriage. On the other hand, sensible and sober-minded men, offended at such excesses, acquiesce in the notion, that the gift of the Holy Ghost was almost peculiar to the Apostles' day, that now, at least, it does nothing more than make us decent and orderly members of society; the privileges bestowed upon us in Scripture being, as they conceive, but of an external nature, education and the like, or, at the most, a pardon of our sins and admission to God's favour, unaccompanied by any actual and inherent powers bestowed upon us. Such are the conse-

quences which naturally follow, when, from one cause or other, any of those doctrines are obscured, which have been revealed in mercy to our necessities. The mind catches at the words of life, and tries to apprehend them; and being debarred their true meaning, takes up with this or that form of error, as the case may be, in the semblance of truth, by way of compensation.

For ourselves, in proportion as we realize that higher view of the subject, which we may humbly trust is the true one, let us be careful to act up to it. Let us adore the Sacred Presence within us with all fear, and "rejoice with trembling." Let us offer up our best gifts in sacrifice to Him who, instead of abhorring, has taken up His abode in these sinful hearts of ours. Prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, "good works and alms-deeds," a bold and true confession and a self-denying walk, are the ritual of worship by which we serve Him in these His Temples. How the distinct and particular works of faith avail to our final acceptance, we know not; neither do we know how they are efficacious in changing our wills and characters, which, through God's grace, they certainly do. All we know is, that as we persevere in them, the inward light grows brighter and brighter, and God manifests Himself in us in a way the world knows not of. In this, then, consists our whole duty, first in contemplating Almighty God, as in Heaven, so in our hearts and souls; and next, while we contemplate Him, in acting towards and for Him in the works of every day; in viewing by faith His glory without and within us, and in acknowledging it by our obedience. Thus we

shall unite conceptions the most lofty concerning His majesty and bounty towards us, with the most lowly, minute, and unostentatious service to Him.

Lastly, the doctrine on which I have been dwelling cannot fail to produce in us deeper and more reverent feelings towards the Church of Christ, as His especial dwelling-place. It is evident we are in a much more extraordinary state than we are at all aware of. The multitude do not understand this. So it was in Israel once. There was a time when, even at Bethel, where God had already vouchsafed a warning against such ignorance, the very children of the city "mocked" His prophet, little thinking he had with him the mantle of Elijah. In an after age, the prophet Ezekiel was bid prophesy to the people, "whether they would hear or whether they would forbear;" and, it was added, "and they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."[1]

Let us not fear, therefore, to be but a few among many in our belief. Let us not fear opposition, suspicion, reproach, or ridicule. God sees us; and His Angels, they are looking on. They know we are right, and bear witness to us; and, "yet a little while, and He that cometh shall come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by *faith*."[2]

[1] 2 Kings ii. 23; Ezek. ii. 5, 7. [2] Heb. x. 37, 38.

SERMON XIX.

REGENERATING BAPTISM.

1 Cor. xii. 13.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body."

AS there is One Holy Ghost, so there is one only visible Body of Christians which Almighty God "knows by name," and one Baptism which admits men into it. This is implied in the text, which is nearly parallel to St. Paul's words to the Ephesians: "There is one Body, and one Spirit, one Baptism." But more than this is taught us in it; not only that the Holy Ghost is in the Church, and that Baptism admits into it, but that the Holy Ghost admits by means of Baptism, that the Holy Ghost baptizes; in other words, that each individual member receives the gift of the Holy Ghost as a preliminary step, a condition, or means of his being incorporated into the Church; or, in our Saviour's words, that no one can enter, except he be regenerated in order to enter it.

Now, this is much more than many men are willing to grant, their utmost concession being, that the Church has the presence of the Holy Spirit in it, and therefore, to be in the Church is to be in that which has the

presence of the Holy Spirit; that is, to be in the *way* of the Spirit (so to speak), which cannot but be a state of favour and privilege; but, that the Holy Spirit is given to infants, one by one, on their Baptism, this they will not admit. Yet, one would think words could not be plainer than the text in proof of it; however, they do not admit it.

This defective view of the Sacrament of Baptism, for so I must not shrink from calling it, shall now be considered, and considered in its connection with a popular argument for the Baptism of infants, which, most true as it is in its proper place, yet is scarcely profitable for these times, as seeming to countenance the error in question. I mean, the assumed parallel between Baptism and Circumcision.

It is undeniable that Circumcision in some important respects resembles Baptism, and may allowably, nay, usefully be referred to in illustration of it. Circumcision was the entrance into the Jewish Covenant, and it typified the renunciation of the flesh. In respects such as these it resembles Baptism; and hence it has been of service in the argument for Infant Baptism, as having been itself administered to infants. But, though it resembles Baptism in some respects, it is unlike it in others more important. When, then, it is found to be the chief and especially approved argument in favour of Infant Baptism among Christians, there is reason for some anxiety, lest this circumstance should betoken, or introduce, insufficient views of a Christian Sacrament. This remark, I fear, is applicable in the present day.

We baptize infants, in the first place, because the Church has ever done so; and, to say nothing of the duty of observing and transmitting what we have received, in the case of so great a privilege as Baptism, we should be ungrateful and insensible indeed if we did not give our children the benefit of the usage, even though Scripture said not a word on the subject, so that it said nothing the other way. But, besides, we consider we do find, in our Saviour's words, a command to bring children to Him, for His blessing. Again, He said they were to be members of His Kingdom; also, that Baptism is the only entrance, the new birth into it. We administer, then, Baptism to children as a sure *benefit* to their souls.

But, when men refuse to admit the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration in the case of infants, then they look about how they may defend Infant Baptism, which, perhaps, from habit, good feeling, or other causes, they do not like to abandon. The ordinary and intelligible reason for the Baptism of infants, is the securing to them remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—Regeneration: but if this sacred privilege is not given to them in Baptism, why, it may be asked, should Baptism be administered to them at all? Why not wait till they can understand the meaning of the rite, and can have faith and repentance themselves? Certainly it does seem a very intricate and unreasonable proceeding; first, to lay stress on the necessity of repentance and faith in persons to be baptized, and then to proceed to administer Baptism universally in such a way as to exclude the possibility of their having

repentance and faith. I say, this would be strange and inconsistent, were not Baptism, in itself, so direct a blessing that, when parents demand it for their children, all abstract rules must, in very charity, necessarily give way. We administer it whenever we do not discover some actual obstacle in the recipient to hinder its efficacy, as we give medicine to the sick. Otherwise the objection holds; and, accordingly, clear-sighted men, who deny its regenerating power in the case of infants, often do come to the conclusion that to administer it to them is a needless and officious act, nay, a profanation of a sacred institution. It seems to them a mockery to baptize them; the waste of an edifying rite, not to say a Sacrament, upon those who cannot understand or use it; and, to speak the truth, they do appear reasonable and straightforward in their inference, granting their premises. It does seem as if those who deny the regeneration of infants ought, if they were consistent (which happily they are not), to refrain from baptizing them. Surely, if we go by Scripture, the question is decided at once; for no one can deny that there is much more said in Scripture in behalf of the connection between Baptism and Divine grace, than about the duty of Infant Baptism. The passage can scarcely be named, in the New Testament, where Baptism is referred to, without the mention, direct or indirect, of spiritual influences. What right have we to put asunder what God has united? especially since, on the other hand, the text cannot be found which plainly enjoins the Baptism of infants. If the doctrine and the practice are irreconcilable—Baptismal Regeneration

and Infant Baptism—let the practice, which is not written in Scripture, yield to the doctrine which is; and let us (if we can bear to do so) defraud infants of Baptism, not Baptism of its supernatural virtue. Let us go counter to Tradition rather than to Scripture. This being the difficulty which comes upon those who deny the Regeneration, yet would retain the Baptism of infants, let us next see how they meet it.

We need not suppose that all I am drawing out passes through the mind of every one who denies that infants are regenerated in Baptism: but, surely, some such processes of thought are implied, which it may be useful to ourselves to trace out. This being understood, I observe that the partly assumed and partly real parallel of Circumcision comes, in fact, whether they know it or not, as a sort of refuge to those who have taken up this intermediate position between Catholic doctrine and heretical practice. They avail themselves of the instance of Circumcision as a proof that a divinely-appointed ordinance need not convey grace, even while it admits into a state of grace; and they argue from the analogy between Circumcision and Baptism, that what was the case with the Mosaic ordinance is the case with the Christian also. Circumcision admitted to certain privileges, to the means of grace, to teaching, and the like; Baptism, they consider, does the same and no more. It has also the same uses as Circumcision, in teaching the necessity of inward sanctification, and implying the original corrupt condition of our nature. In like manner, it ought to be administered to infants, since Circumcision was so administered under the Law.

I do not deny that this view is consistent with itself, and plausible. And it would be perfectly satisfactory, as a view, were it Scriptural. But the plain objection to it is, that Christ and His Apostles do attach a grace to the ordinance of Baptism, such as is not attached in the Old Testament to Circumcision—which is exactly that difference which makes the latter a mere rite, the former a Sacrament; and if this be so, it is nothing to the purpose to build up an argument on the assumption that the two ordinances are precisely the same.

Surely we have forgotten, in good measure, the difference between Jewish Ordinances and Christian. It was said of old time, after St. Paul, "The Law has a shadow, the Gospel an image, Heaven the reality;" or, in other words, that of those heavenly blessings which the Jewish Dispensation prefigured, the Christian imparts a portion or earnest. This, then, is the distinction between our ritual and the Mosaic. The Jewish rites had no substance of blessing in them; they were but outward signs and types of spiritual privileges. They had in them no "grace and truth." When the Divine Antitype came, they were simply and merely in the way; they did but hide from the eye of faith the reality which they had been useful in introducing. They were as the forerunners in a procession, who, after announcing their Prince's coming, must themselves retire, or they crowd his path. Nor these alone, but all mere ceremonies were then for ever unseasonable, as mere obstacles intercepting the Divine light. Yet, while Christ abolished them, considered as means of expiation or mere badges of profession, or as prophetical

types of what was no longer future, He introduced another class of ordinances in their stead; Mysteries, as they are sometimes called, among which are the Sacraments, viz., rites as valueless and powerless in themselves as the Jewish, but being, what the Jewish were not, instruments of the application of His merits to individual believers. Though He now sits on the right hand of God, He has, in one sense, never left the world since He first entered it; for, by the ministration of the Holy Ghost, He is really present with us in an unknown way, and ever imparts Himself to those who seek Him. Even when visibly on earth He, the Son of Man, was still "in heaven;" and now, though He is ascended on high, He is still on earth. And as He is still with us, for all that He is in heaven, so, again, is the hour of His cross and passion ever mystically present, though it be past these eighteen hundred years. Time and space have no portion in the spiritual Kingdom which He has founded; and the rites of His Church are as mysterious spells by which He annuls them both. They are not like the Jewish ordinances, long and laborious, expensive or irksome, with aught of value or merit in themselves: they are so simple, so brief, with so little of outward substance, that the mind is not detained for a moment from Him who works by means of them, but takes them for what they really are, only so far outward as to serve for a medium of the heavenly gift. Thus Christ shines through them, as through transparent bodies, without impediment. He is the Light and Life of the Church, acting through it, dispensing of His fulness, knitting and compacting

together every part of it; and these its Mysteries are not mere outward signs, but (as it were) effluences of His grace developing themselves in external forms, as Angels might do when they appeared to men. He has touched them, and breathed upon them, when He ordained them; and thenceforth they have a virtue in them, which issues forth and encircles them round, till the eye of faith sees in them no element of matter at all. Once for all He hung upon the cross, and blood and water issued from His pierced side, but by the Spirit's ministration, the blood and water are ever flowing, as though His cross were really set up among us, and the baptismal water were but an outward image meeting our senses. Thus in a true sense that water is not what it was before, but is gifted with new and spiritual qualities. Not as if its material substance were changed, which our eyes see, or as if any new nature were imparted to it, but that the lifegiving Spirit, who could make bread of stones, and sustain animal life on dust and ashes, applies the blood of Christ through it; or according to the doctrine of the text, that He, and not man, is the baptizer.

St. Paul sets this great truth before us, among other places, in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians. First, he says, "In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye have fulness in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power." Here the most solemn and transporting doctrine of the Incarnation is disclosed to us, as the corner stone of the whole Church system; "the Word made flesh," being the divinely appointed Way whereby we are regenerated

and saved. The Apostle then proceeds to describe the manner in which this divine fulness is imparted to us, and in so doing contrasts the Jewish ceremony of Circumcision with the spiritual Ordinance which has superseded it. "In whom also," in Christ, "ye are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands," heavenly, supernatural, invisible; "when ye strip yourselves of the body of the sins of the flesh, and receive" the true circumcision, "the circumcision of Christ, namely, buried with Him in Baptism." Thus Baptism is a spiritual Circumcision. He continues still more plainly. "Let no man *therefore* judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Now if Baptism were but an outward rite, like Circumcision, how strange a proof would it be of the Gospel's superseding *all* outward rites, to say that it enforced Baptism! He says, "Ye have Baptism, *therefore* do not think of *shadows*," as if Baptism took the place of shadows, as if it were certainly not a shadow but a substance. Again he says, "But the body is of Christ;" Circumcision is a shadow, but Baptism and the other Mysteries of the Church are "the *body*," and that because they are "of Christ." And lastly, he speaks of the duty of "holding to the Head," that is, to Christ, "from whom the whole body, being nourished and knit together by joints and bands, increaseth with a godly increase." What are these joints and bands but the Christian Ordinances and Ministrations, together with those who perform them? but observe, they are of

such a nature as to subserve the "increase" of the Church.

Such is St. Paul's doctrine after Christ had died; St. John the Baptist teaches the same beforehand. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Doubtless there is an allusion here to the special descent of the Spirit at Pentecost; but, even taking it as such, the fulfilment of the Baptist's words then, becomes a pledge to us of the fulfilment of our Saviour's words to Nicodemus to the end of time. He who came by fire at Pentecost, will, as He has said, come by water now. But we may reasonably consider these very words of the Baptist as referring to ordinary Christian Baptism, as well as to the miraculous Baptism of the Apostles. As if he said, "Christ's Baptism shall not be mere water, as mine is. What you see of it indeed is water, but that is but the subordinate element of it; for it is water endued with high and supernatural qualities. Would it not surprise you if water burned like fire? Such, and more than such, is the mystery of that water which He shall pour out on you, having a searching and efficacious influence upon the soul itself."

Now, if any one says that such passages as this *need* not mean all I have supposed, I answer, that the question is not what they *must* mean, but what they *do* mean. I am not now engaged in proving, but in explaining the doctrine of Baptism, and in illustrating it from Scripture.

To return:—hence too the Baptismal Font is called

"the washing *of regeneration*," not of mere water, "and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He hath poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;" and Christ is said to have "loved the Church and given Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church."

Further, let us consider the instances of the administration of Baptism in the Acts of the Apostles. If it be as serious a rite as I have represented, surely it must be there set forth as a great thing, and received with awe and thankfulness. Now we shall find these expectations altogether fulfilled. For instance, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter said to the multitude, who asked what they must do, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Accordingly, "they that gladly received His word were baptized," in order to obtain these privileges; and, forthwith, we hear of their continuing "in gladness and singleness of heart, praising God." Again, when the Ethiopian Eunuch had been baptized by Philip, he "went on his way rejoicing." After St. Paul had been struck down by the Saviour whom he was persecuting, and sent to Damascus, he began to pray; but though in one sense a changed man already, he had not yet received the gift of regeneration, nor did he receive it except by the ministry of Ananias, who was sent to Him from Christ, expressly that he "might be filled with the Holy Ghost." Accordingly, Ananias said to him, "And now why tarriest thou?

arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." So again Cornelius, religious man as he was, and that doubtless by God's secret aid, yet was not received into Christ's family except by Baptism. Even the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him and his friends miraculously, while St. Peter was preaching to them, did not supersede the necessity of the Sacrament. And lastly, when the jailor at Philippi had been baptized, he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."[1]

These and similar passages seem to prove clearly the superiority of Baptism to Circumcision, as being a Sacrament; but if they did not, what conclusion should we have arrived at? no other than this, that Baptism is like Circumcision, but a carnal ordinance (if the words may be spoken), not a spiritual possession. See what follows. Do you not recollect how much St. Paul says in depreciation of the rites of the Jewish Law, on the ground of their being rudiments of this world, carnal ordinances? Now if Baptism be altogether like Circumcision, can it, any more than they, have a place in the New Covenant? This was the very defect of the Mosaic Law, that it was but a form; this was one part of the bondage of the Jews, that they were put under forms, which contained in them no direct or intrinsic virtue, but had their spiritual use only as obeyed for conscience' sake, and as means of prophetic instruction. Surely this cannot be our state under the Gospel: "We," says St. Paul, "when we were children," that is, Jews, "were in bondage under

[1] Acts ii. 38–47; viii. 39; ix. 17; xxii. 16; x. 44–48; xvi. 34.

the elements of the world; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman . . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Is it possible, then, now that the Spirit is come, we can be under dead rites and ordinances? It is plainly impossible. If Baptism then has no spiritual virtue in it, can it be intended for us Christians? If it has no regenerating power, surely they only are consistent who reject it altogether. I will boldly say it, we have nothing dead and earthly under the Gospel, and we act like the Judaizing Christians of old time if we submit to anything such; therefore they only are consistent, who, denying the virtue of Baptism, also deny its authority as a permanent ordinance of the Gospel. Surely it was but intended for the infancy of the Church, ere men were weaned from their attachment to a ritual. Surely it was but an oriental custom, edifying to those who loved a symbolical worship, but needless, nay, harmful to us; harmful as impeding the prerogative of Christian liberty, obscuring our view of the one Christian Atonement, corrupting the simplicity of our faith and trust, and profaning the dispensation of the Spirit! I repeat it, either Baptism is an instrument of the Holy Ghost, or it has no place in Christianity. We indeed, who, in accordance with the teaching of the Church Universal, believe that it is an act of the Spirit, are under no difficulty in this matter. But let those who deny it look to themselves. They are on their own principles committing the sin

of the Galatians, and severing themselves from Christ. Surely if their doctrine be right, they may consider themselves addressed by St. Paul in his language to those early Judaizers, "O senseless Galatians," he would have said to them, "who hath bewitched you? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Why burden yourselves with mere ceremonies, external washings, the rudiments of the world, shadows of good things, weak, beggarly, and unprofitable elements, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage? Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage. Spiritual men are delivered from formal observances. If ye be baptized, Christ shall profit you nothing; for neither Baptism availeth anything nor want of Baptism, but faith which worketh by love. Neither Baptism availeth anything nor want of Baptism, but a new creature; and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

Such, doubtless, is the only consistent mode of regarding and treating this sacred ordinance, if it has no power or grace in it above a Jewish rite. We should discard it. And in whatever degree we think it thus unprofitable, so far we should discard it. If we think it but a figure in the case of children, though a Sacrament to grown men, we should keep from wasting upon children what would benefit them as men. And this holds good of all the ordinances of the Church; so far as they are but outward forms, let them be abolished as parts of dead Judaism. But, praised be God! they are

none of them such. They all have life. Christ has lodged virtue in His Church, and she dispenses it forth from her in all her words and works. Why will you not believe this? What do you gain by so jealous and niggardly a spirit, such "slowness of heart," but the loss of thoughts full of comfort and of majesty? To view Christ as all but visibly revealed—to look upon His ordinances, not in themselves, but as signs of His presence and power, as the accents of His love, the very form and countenance of Him who ever beholds us, ever cherishes us—to see Him thus revealed in glory day by day—is not this to those who believe it an unspeakable privilege? Is it not so great that a man might well wish it true from the excellence of it, and count them happy who are able to receive it? And when this is all plainly revealed in Scripture, when we are expressly told that Christ washes us by Water to change us into a glorious Church, that the consecrated bread is His flesh, that He is present with His ministers, and is in the midst of His Church, why should we draw back, like Thomas doubting of our Lord's resurrection? "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!" Surely, so it is; and however the world may scorn our faith, however those may despise us from whom we might expect better things, we will cheerfully bear what is a slight drawback indeed on our extreme blessedness. While they accuse us of trusting in ourselves, of trusting in our forms, and of ignorance of the Gospel, we will meekly say in our hearts, "'Thou God, seest me:' Thou knowest that we desire to love nothing but Thee, and to trust in nothing but the cross

of Christ; and that we relinquish all self-reliance, and know ourselves in ourselves to have nothing but sin and misery, and esteem these ordinances of Thine not for their own sake, but as memorials of Thee and of Thy Son—memorials which He has appointed, which He has blessed, and in which, by faith, we see Him manifested, day by day, and through which we hope to receive the imputation of those merits, once for all wrought out on the Cross, and our only effectual help in the day of account."

SERMON XX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

MATT. xviii. 5.

"Whoso shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me."

PERHAPS there are no words uttered by our Lord in the Gospels more gracious and considerate, as well as holy, just, and good (that is, if we dare measure His words by our own sense of them), than the encouragement given in this text, and others of a similar character; none, more gracious and considerate, taking into account our nature and the necessary consequence of believing the doctrines He has brought to light. He has brought to light life and immortality; but, with immortal life, He has also brought to light eternal death; He has revealed the awful truth, that the soul never dies, never ceases to think and to be conscious, to be capable of happiness or misery; that when once a man is born into the world, neither time nor place, friend nor enemy, Angels nor devils, can touch the living principle within him; not even himself has any power over himself; but, as he has begun, so he must continue to exist on to eternity. He has taught us, that every child, from the

moment of his birth, has this prospect before him; also, that far from being sure of heaven, he is to be put on a trial, whether He will serve God or no; nay, not only on a trial, but on a trial not on even terms; not a trial to which he is equal, but with a strong propensity within him to the worse alternative, a tendency weighing him down to earth; so that of himself, he cannot serve God acceptably, or even repent of his unworthy service.

I say, if we knew only this, no thoughtful person could ever, without the greatest humiliation and terror, reflect on his being responsible for the existence of beings exposed to such miserable disadvantages. Surely, if we only knew the primary doctrines of the Gospel, viz., that man is a sinner by nature, and though redeemed by Christ, cannot turn to Christ of his own strength, I say, the cruelty of giving birth to poor infants, who should inherit our nature and receive from us the birthright of corruption, would be so great, that bowing the head to God's appointment, and believing it to be good and true, we could but conclude with the Apostles on one occasion, that "it were good not to marry." Our knowledge of the real condition of man in God's sight would surely lead to the breaking up of society, in proportion as it was sincerely and simply received; for what good were it to know that Christ has died for us, if we also knew that no one is by nature able to repent and believe, and knew nothing more? It would lead thoughtful men to think of their own personal salvation only, and thus to defraud Christ of the succession of believers, and the perpetual family of

Saints, which is to be the salt of the earth to the end of time and the full fruit of His passion.

It is true, there is another doctrine besides those which I have stated, viz., that Christ has not only died for sinners, but also vouchsafes from above the influences of grace, to enable them to love what by nature they cannot love, and to do what they cannot do—to believe and obey. But even this would not be enough to remove the alarm and distress of the Christian parent. For, though God mercifully gives His grace to enable men to believe in His Son, yet it is as certain as the truth of Scripture itself, that He does not give His grace to *all*, but to those to whom He will. If any word of Scripture be true, it is this—that there is an election, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," that some men are brought near unto God, and gifted with His regenerating grace, and others not; so that, although we knew ever so much concerning the gift of the Holy Ghost, as well as concerning the meritorious death of Christ, yet, that knowledge would not tend a whit more to reconcile religious men to what they must certainly consider the cruelty, and the personal responsibility of becoming a parent.

I would say, then, that if this were all we knew on the subject, no one of any seriousness could bear the thought of adding to this world's "children of wrath," except an express divine command obliged him to do so. If even a single deliberate act of sin be (as it is) a great and fearful matter, mortal and damnable, yet what is any sin, say blasphemy, murder, idolatry, even the

greatest, what would it be to the giving being to a soul intelligent, individual, accountable, fraught with all the sensibilities and affections which belong to human nature, capable of pain, immortal, and in due season manifesting a will incurably corrupt, and a heart at enmity with God, even though there were the chance that possibly it might be one of those who were elected for eternal life? There can be no doubt that if we know no more of the Gospel than I have hitherto mentioned, if we content ourselves with that half Gospel which is sometimes taken for the whole, none would be so selfish and so unfeeling as we, who could be content, for the sake of worldly comforts, a cheerful home, and the like, to surround ourselves with those, about whom, dearly as we loved them, and fervently as we might pray for them, we only knew thus much, that there was a chance—a chance of some sort that, perhaps, they might be in the number of the few whom Christ rescues from the curse of original sin.

Let us now see how His gracious words contained in the text remove the difficulty.

In truth, our Merciful Saviour has done much more for us than reveal the wonderful doctrines of the Gospel; He has enabled us to apply them. He has given us directions as well as doctrines, and while giving them has imparted to us especial encouragement and comfort. What an inactive useless world this would be, if the sun's light did not diffuse itself through the air and fall on all objects around us, enabling us to see earth and sky as well as the sun itself! Cannot we conceive nature so constituted that the sun appeared as a bright

spot in the heavens, while the heavens themselves were black as in the starlight, and the earth dark as night? Such would have been our religious state, had not our Lord applied and diversified and poured to and fro, in heat and light, those heavenly glories which are concentrated in Him. He would shine upon us from above in all His high attributes and offices, as the Prophet, Priest, and King of His elect; but how should we bring home His grace to ourselves? How indeed should we gain, and know we gain, an answer to our prayers—how secure the comfortable assurance that He loves us personally, and will change our hearts, which we feel to be so earthly, and wash away our sins, which we confess to be so manifold, unless He had given us Sacraments —means and pledges of grace—keys which open the treasure-house of mercy—ordinances in which we not only ask, but receive, and know we receive, all we can receive as accountable beings (not, indeed, the certainty of heaven, for we are still in the flesh), but the certainty of God's present favour, the certainty that He is reconciled to us, will work in us and with us all righteousness, will so supply our need, that henceforth we shall lack nothing for the completion and overflowing sanctification of our defective and sinful nature, but have all, and more than all that Adam ever had in his first purity, all that the highest Archangel or Seraph ever had, when on his trial whether he would stand or fall?

For instance, in the particular case I have been considering, our gracious Lord has done much more than tell us that some souls are elected to the mercies of redemption and others not. He has not left Christians

thus uncertain about their children. He has expressly assured us that children are in the number of His chosen; and, if you ask, whether all children, I reply, all children you can bring to Baptism, all children who are within reach of it. So literally has He fulfilled His promise: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price!" and again, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." He has disclosed His secret election in a visible Sacrament, and thus enables Christians to bear to be, what otherwise they would necessarily shrink from being—parents. He relieves, my brethren, your anxious minds, anxious (as they must ever be) for your children's welfare, even after all the good promises of the Gospel, but unspeakably anxious before you understand *how* you are to be rid of the extreme responsibility of bestowing an eternal being upon sinful creatures whom you cannot change. With the tenderest feeling He removes your difficulty. He bids you bring them to Him from the first, and then take and educate them in His name. Like Pharaoh's daughter, He takes them up when you, their natural kin, have been forced to abandon them to inevitable death; and then He gives them back to you to nurse for His sake. "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."[1] Again in the text, "Whoso shall

[1] Mark x. 14.

receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me." Observe how He speaks, as if He would give you some great and urgent encouragement; not only does He give permission, but He promises a reward to those who dedicate children to Him. He not only bids us do the very thing we wish to do, but bestows on the doing it a second blessing. He promises that if we bring children to Him for His blessing, He will bless us for bringing them; if we receive them for His sake, He will make it as if we received Himself, which is the greatest reward He could give us. Thus, while we are engaged in this work of receiving children in His name, let us recollect, to our great comfort, that we are about no earthly toil; we are taking part in a joyful solemnity, in a blessed and holy ordinance, in which our Saviour Christ not only comes to them, but is spiritually received into our own souls.

These reflections arise on the first view of the subject. However, it may be objected, that, after all, numbers fall away from God, even with the advantages of Baptism, and if so, the birth of children is not a less awful subject of contemplation now than before, nay rather more so, inasmuch as a heavier doom awaits those who sin after grace given, than those who have not received it.

But this objection surely brings us to a very different question. What I have been saying comes to this:—that a child seems by its very nature, which is corrupt and ungodly, to complain of those parents who gave it him; I mean, seems to do so in the parents' estimation, when they think of him. Their tender love towards

him is humbled and distressed by this thought: "This dear and helpless object of our affection is a sinner through his parents, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, born a child of wrath." Now, I conceive this dreadful thought is at once removed, directly it is known that they who gave him his natural being may also bring him to a second birth, in which original sin is washed away, and such influences of grace given and promised as make it a child's own fault, if he, in the event, fails of receiving an eternal inheritance of blessedness in God's presence. They undo their own original injury. Now that Christ receives us in our infancy, no one has any ground for complaining of his fallen nature. He receives by birth a curse, but by Baptism a blessing, and the blessing is the greater; and to murmur now against his condition is all one with murmuring against his being created at all, his being created as a responsible being, which is a murmuring, not against man, but against God; for though it was man who has made our nature inclined to evil, yet, that we are beings on a trial, with moral natures, a power to do right or wrong, and a capacity of happiness or misery, is not man's work, but the Creator's. Thus parents being allowed to bestow a second birth upon their offspring, henceforth do but share and are sheltered in His responsibility (if I may dare so to speak), who is ever "justified in His sayings, and overcomes when He is judged."

However, it may be asked, how this applies to the case of the heathen? They cannot bring their children to Baptism, therefore they do incur the responsibility of

giving being to souls who live and die in the wrath of God. I answer, that a man cannot be responsible for that about which he is altogether ignorant. The heathen have no knowledge of the real state of mankind, and therefore they can have none of the duties which arise out of that knowledge. None of us, not even Christians, know fully our own condition, and the consequences of our actions; else, doubtless, we should be too much overpowered to act at all. Did we see the complete consequences of any one sin, did we see how it spreads by the contagion of example and influence through the world, how many souls it injures, and what its eternal effects are, doubtless we should become speechless and motionless, as though we saw the flames of hell fire. Enough light is given us to direct us, and to make us responsible beings, not so much as to overwhelm us. We are not told the secret of our guilty nature, till we are told the means to escape from it; we are not told of God's fearful wrath, till we are told of His love in Christ. The heathen do not know of Baptism, but they do not know of original sin; for God would allot fear, faith, and hope to all men, despair to none. Again, the heathen know nothing of the eternity of future punishment, yet our Lord, in His account of the Judgment, when "*all* nations" shall be gathered before Him, does not except them from the risk of it. They know neither of eternal death nor eternal life. Let us leave the case of the heathen, about which nothing has been revealed to us; they are in the hand of God, the righteous and merciful God; "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"[1]

[1] Gen. xviii. 25.

But further, it may be objected that though Baptism is vouchsafed to the children of Christian parents, yet we are expressly assured that the few, not the many, shall be saved; so that the gift, however great, does not remove the difficulty in our way, or make it less of a risk to bring into existence those who are more likely to be among the wretched many than the blessed few. But, surely, this is a misconception of our Saviour's words. Where does He say that only few of the children *of His sincere followers* shall be saved? He says, indeed, that there will be but few out of the whole multitude of the regenerate; and the greater number of them, as we know too well, are disobedient to their calling. No wonder if their children turn out like themselves, and live to this world. But, because the mass of men abuse their privileges, which we see they do, and because we dare not entertain any sanguine hopes of the children of careless parents, how does this prove that those who do live in God's faith and fear, and are labouring and tending to be in the number of the elect few, may not cherish the confidence that their children, in like manner, will in due season obey God's calling, yield to His Holy Spirit, "be made like the image of His Only-begotten Son, walk religiously in good works," and at length attain to everlasting glory? Solomon, even under the Law, assures us that, if "a child be trained up in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it."[1] Much more (please God) will this be true, where the parents' prayers and the children's training are preceded by the grant of so

[1] Prov. xxii. 6.

great and present a benefit as regenerating Baptism; much more, when His Son has so graciously made the little children patterns to grown men, declaring that then, and then only, we become true members of His Kingdom when we become like them, and when, in sign of His favour "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Let a man consider how much is contained in the declaration, that God "hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation;"[1] and he will feel that he may safely trust his children to their Lord and Saviour—reluctance being no longer a serious prudence, but an unbelieving and unthankful jealousy, and the care of them no burdensome nor sorrowful toil, though an anxious one, but a labour of love, a joyful service done to Christ.

Lastly, it may still be asked what encouragement after all has been gained through Christian Baptism, which we should not have had without it, since it seems the children's hopes are to be ultimately rested not on the Sacrament administered, but on the parents' faith and prayers and careful training of them. These means, it may be objected, might and would have been used by religious men, even though they had known only of Christ's merits and gifts without direction how to convey and apply them to individuals; they would have prayed and been careful then, and so gained grace for their children, and they can do no more now. But can you indeed thus argue? What! is there no difference between asking and receiving?—for prayer is an asking and Baptism is a receiving. Is there no

[1] Thess. v. 9.

difference between a chance and a certainty? How many infants die in their childhood! is it no difference between knowing that a child is gone to heaven, or that he has died as he was born? But supposing a child lives, is not regeneration a real gain? does not it renew our nature, exalt us in the scale of being, give us additional powers, open upon us untold blessings, and moreover brighten in an extreme degree the prospect of our salvation, if religious training follows? I will say more. Many men die without any signs of confirmed holiness, or formed character one way or the other. We know, indeed, that privileges not improved will save no one; but we do not know, we cannot pronounce, whether in souls where there is but a little strength, yet much conflict, and much repentance, their regeneration may not, as in the case with children, avail them hereafter in some secret manner which, with our present knowledge, we cannot speak about or imagine. Surely it is not a slight benefit to have been "made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted of the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come."[1]

Now, I trust that these considerations may suffice, through God's grace, to open on you a more serious view of the subject treated of, than is often taken even by those who are not without religious thoughts upon it. I fear, indeed, that most men, though they profess and have a regard for religion, yet have very low and contracted notions of the dignity of their station as *Christians*. To be a Christian is one of the most wondrous and awful gifts in the world. It is, in one

[1] Heb. vi. 4, 5.

sense, to be higher than Angel or Archangel. If we have any portion of an enlightened faith, we shall understand that our state, as members of Christ's Church, is full of mystery. What so mysterious as to be born, as we are, under God's wrath? What so mysterious as to be redeemed by the death of the Son of God made flesh? What so mysterious as to receive the virtue of that death one by one through Sacraments? What so mysterious as to be able to teach and train each other in good or evil? When a man at all enters into such thoughts, how is his view changed about the birth of children! in what a different light do his duties, as a parent, break upon him! The notion entertained by most men seems to be, that it is a pleasant thing to have a home;—this is what would be called an innocent and praiseworthy reason for marrying;—that a wife and family are comforts. And the highest view a number of persons take is, that it is decent and respectable to be a married man; that it gives a man a station in society, and settles him. All this is true. Doubtless wife and children *are* blessings from God: and it *is* praiseworthy and right to be domestic, and to live in orderly and honourable habits. But a man who limits his view to these thoughts, who does not look at marriage and at the birth of children as something of a much higher and more heavenly nature than anything we see, who does not discern in Holy Matrimony a divine ordinance, shadowing out the union between Christ and the Church, and does not associate the birth of children with the Ordinance of their new birth, such a

one, I can only say, has very carnal views. It is well to go on labouring, year after year, for the bread that perisheth; and if we are well off in the world, to take interest and pleasure in our families rather than to seek amusements out of doors; it is very well, but it is not religion; and let us endeavour to make our feelings towards them more and more religious. Let us beware of aiming at nothing higher than their being educated well for this world, their forming respectable connections, succeeding in their callings, and settling well. Let us never think we have absolved ourselves from the responsibility of being their parents, till we have brought them to Christ, as in Baptism, so by religious training. Let us bear in mind ever to pray for their eternal salvation; let us "watch for their souls as those who must give account." Let us remember that salvation does not come as a matter of course; that Baptism, though administered to them once and long since, is never past, always lives in them as a blessing or as a burden: and that though we may cherish a joyful confidence that "He who hath begun a good work in them will perform it," then only have we a right to cherish it, when we are doing our part towards fulfilling it.

SERMON XXI.

THE DAILY SERVICE.

HEB. x. 25.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the Day approaching."

THE first Christians set up the Church in continual prayer "They persevering daily with one mind in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did share their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God."[1] St. Paul in his Epistles binds their example upon their successors for ever. Indeed, we could not have conceived, even if he and the other Apostles had been silent, that such a solemn opening of the Gospel, as that contained in the book of Acts, was only of a temporary nature, and not rather a specimen of what was to take place among the elect people in every age, and a shadow of that perfect service which will be their blessedness in heaven. However, St. Paul removes all doubt on this subject by expressly enjoining this united and unceasing prayer in various passages of his Epistles; as for instance, "I will . . . that men

[1] Acts ii. 46, 47.

pray in every place, lifting up holy hands."[1] "Persevere in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"[2] and in the text.

But it will be said, "Times are altered; the rites and observances of the Church are local and occasional; what was a duty then, need not be a duty now, even though St. Paul happens to enjoin it on those whom he addresses. Such continual prayer was the particular form which the religion of the early Christians took, and ours has taken another form." Do not suppose, because I allow myself thus to word the objection, that I therefore, for an instant, allow that continual united prayer may religiously be considered a mere usage or fashion; but so it is treated—so, perhaps, some of us in our secret hearts have at times been tempted to imagine; that is, we have been disposed to think that public worship at intervals of a week has in it something of natural fitness and reasonableness which continual week-day worship has not. Still, supposing it—granting daily worship to be a mere observance, or an usage, while Sunday worship is not—calling it by any title the most slighting and disparaging—the question returns, was this observance or usage of continual united prayer intended by the Apostles, for every age of the Church, or only for the early Christians? A precept may be but positive, not simply moral, and yet of perpetual obligation. Now, I answer confidently, that united prayer, unceasing prayer, is enjoined by St. Paul, in a passage just cited. from an Epistle which lays down rules for the government and due order of the Church to the end of time.

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 8. [2] Col. iv. 2.

More plausibly even might we desecrate Sunday, which he does not mention in it, than neglect continual prayer, which he does. Observe how explicitly he speaks, "I will therefore that men pray in *every place;*"—not only at Jerusalem, not only at Corinth, not only in Rome, but even in England; in England at this day, in our secluded villages, in our rich populous busy towns, whatever be the importance of those secular objects which absorb our thoughts and time.

Or, again, take the text, and consider whether it favours the notion of a change or relaxation of the primitive custom. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so *much the more,* as ye see the Day approaching." The increasing troubles of the world, the fury of Satan, and the madness of the people, the dismay of sun, moon, and stars, distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, the sea and the waves roaring, all these gathering tokens of God's wrath are but calls upon us for greater perseverance in united prayer. Let those men especially consider this, who say that we are but dreaming of centuries gone by, missing our mark and born out of time, when we insist on such duties and practices as are now merely out of fashion; those who point to the tumult and fever which agitates the whole nation, and say we must be busy and troubled too, in order to respond to it; who say that the tide of events has set in one way, and that we must give in to it, if we would be practical men; that it is idleness to attempt to stem a current, which it will be a great thing even to direct: that since the

present age loves conversing and hearing about religion, and does not like silent thought, patient waiting, recurring prayers, severe exercises, that therefore we must obey it, and, dismissing rites and sacraments, convert the Gospel into a rational faith, so called, and a religion of the heart; let these men seriously consider St. Paul's exhortation, that we are to persevere in prayer—and that in every place—and the more, the more troubled and perplexed the affairs of this world become; not indeed omitting active exertions, but not, on that account, omitting prayer.

I have spoken of St. Paul, but, consider how this rule of "continuing in prayer" is exemplified in St. Peter's history also. He had learned from his Saviour's pattern not to think prayer a loss of time. Christ had taken him up with Him into the holy mount, though multitudes waited to be healed and taught below. Again, before His passion, He had taken him into the garden of Gethsemane; and while He prayed Himself, He called upon him likewise to "watch and pray lest he entered into temptation." In consequence, St. Peter warns us in his first Epistle, as St. Paul in the text, "The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."[1] And, in one memorable passage of his history, he received a revelation of a momentous and most gracious truth, when he was at his prayers. Who would not have said that he was wasting his time, when he retired to the house of Simon at Joppa, for many days, and went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour? Was that, it might

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 7.

be asked, the part of an Apostle, whose commission was to preach the Gospel? Was he thus burying his light, instead of meeting the exigencies of the time? Yet, there God met him, and put a word in his mouth. There he learned the comfortable truth that the Gentiles were no longer common or unclean, but admissible into the Covenant of Grace. And if continual prayer was the employment of an Apostle, much more was it observed by those Christians who were less prominently called to labour. Accordingly, when St. Peter was in prison, prayers were offered for him, "without ceasing," by the Church; and to those prayers he was granted. When miraculously released, and arrived at the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, he found "many gathered together praying."[1]

Stated and continual prayer, then, and especially united prayer, is plainly the duty of Christians. And if we ask how often we are to pray, I reply, that we ought to consider prayer as a plain privilege, directly we know that it is a duty, and therefore that the question is out of place. Surely, when we know we may approach the Mercy-seat, the only further question is, whether there be anything to forbid us coming often, anything implying that such frequent coming is presumptuous and irreverent. So great a mercy is it to be permitted to come, that a humble mind may well ask, "Is it a profane intrusion to come when I will?" If it be not, such a one will rejoice to come continually. Now, by way of removing these fears, Scripture contains most condescending intimations that we may come at

[1] Acts xii. 12.

all times. For instance, in the Lord's Prayer petition is made for *daily* bread for *this* day; therefore, our Saviour intended it should be used daily. Further, it is said, "give *us*," "forgive *us*;" therefore it may fairly be presumed to be given us as a social prayer. Thus in the Lord's Prayer itself there seems to be sanction for daily united prayer. Again, if we consider His words in the parable, twice a day at least seems permitted us, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?"[1] though this is to take the words according to a very restricted interpretation. And since Daniel prayed three times a day, and the Psalmist even seven, under the Law, we may infer, that Christians, certainly, are not irreverent, nor incur the blame of using vain repetitions, though they join in many Services.

Now, I do not see what can be said in answer to these arguments, imperfect as they are compared with the whole proof that might be adduced, except that some of the texts cited may, perhaps, refer to mere secret prayer almost without words, and some speak primarily of private prayer. Yet it is undeniable, on the other hand, that united prayer, not private or secret, is principally intended in those passages of the New Testament, which speak of prayer at all; and if so, the remainder may be left to apply indirectly or not, as we chance to decide, without interfering with a conclusion otherwise drawn. If, however, it be said that family prayer is a fulfilment of the duty, without prayer in Church, I reply, that I am not at all speaking of it as a duty, but

[1] Luke xviii. 7.

as a privilege; I do not tell men that they must come to Church, so much as declare the glad tidings that they may. This surely is enough for those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and humbly desire to see the face of God.

Now, I will say a few words on the manner in which the early Christians fulfilled this duty.

Quite at first, when the persecutions raged, they assembled when and where they could. At times they could but avail themselves of Christ's promise, that if two of His disciples "*agree* on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of their Heavenly Father;" though, by small parties, and in the towns, they seem to have met together continually from the first. Gradually, as they grew stronger, or as they happened to be tolerated, they made full proof of their sacred privilege, and showed what was the desire of their hearts.

Their most solemn Service took place on the Lord's day, as might be expected, when the Holy Eucharist was celebrated.[1] Next to Sunday came Wednesday and Friday, when, also, assemblies for worship continued till three o'clock in the afternoon, and were observed with fasting; in some places with the Eucharist also. Saturday, too, was observed in certain branches of the Church with especial devotion, the Holy Mysteries being solemnized and other Services performed as on the Lord's day.

Next must be mentioned, the Festivals of the Martyrs, when, in addition to the sacred Services used on the

[1] Bingham's Antiq., xiii. 9.

Lord's day, there was read some account of the particular Martyr commemorated, with exhortations to follow his pattern.

These holydays, whether Sunday or Saint's day, were commonly ushered in by a Vigil or religious watching, as you find it noted down in the Calendar at the beginning of the Prayer-Book. These lasted through the night.

Moreover, there were the sacred Seasons; such as the forty days of Lent for fasting, and the fifty days between Easter and Whitsuntide for rejoicing.

Such was the course of special devotions in the early Church; but, besides, every day had its ordinary Services, viz., prayer morning and evening.

Besides these, might be mentioned the prayers at the canonical hours, which were originally used for private, but, at length, for united worship; viz., at the third hour, or nine in the morning, in commemoration of the Holy Ghost's descent at Pentecost at that hour; at the sixth, the time of St. Peter's vision at Joppa, in memory of our Saviour's crucifixion; and at the ninth, in memory of His death, which was the hour when St. Peter and St. John went up to the Temple and healed the lame man. It may be added, that in some places the Holy Eucharist was celebrated and partaken daily.

This is by no means a full enumeration of the sacred Services in the early Church; but it is abundantly sufficient for my purpose, which is to show how highly they valued the privilege of united prayer, and how literally they understood the words of Christ and His

Apostles. I am by no means contending, that every point of discipline and order in this day must be precisely the same as it was then. Christians then had more time on their hands than many of us have; and certain peculiarities of the age and place might combine to allow them to do what we cannot do. Still, so far must be clear to every candid person who considers the state of the case, that they found some sort of pleasure in prayer which we do not; that they took delight in an exercise, which—(I am afraid I must say, though it seems profane even to say it)—which we should consider painfully long and tedious.

This too is worth observing of the primitive Christians, that they united social and private prayer in their Service. On holydays, for instance, when it was extended till three o'clock in the afternoon, they commenced with singing the Psalms, in the midst of which two Lessons were read, as is usual with us, commonly one from the Old and one from the New Testament. But in some places, instead of these Lessons, after every Psalm, a short space was allowed for private prayer to be made in silence, much in the way we say a short prayer on coming into and going out of Church. After the Psalms and Lessons came the Sermon, the more solemn prayers having not yet begun. Shortly after, followed the celebration of the Holy Communion, which again was introduced by a time of silence for private prayer, such as we at this day are allowed during the administration of the Sacred Elements to other communicants.

And in this way they lengthened out and varied their

Services; principally, that is, by means of private prayers and psalms: so that, when no regular course of service was proceeding, yet the Church might be full of people, praying in secret and confessing their sins, or singing together psalms or hymns. Thus exactly did they fulfil the Scripture precepts—"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing psalms," and "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."[1]

I have now said enough to let you into the reasons why I lately began Daily Service in this Church. I felt that we were very unlike the early Christians, if we went on without it; and that it was my business to give you an opportunity of observing it, else I was keeping a privilege from you. If you ask, why I did not commence it before? I will rather tell you why I began just at this time. It was, that the state of public affairs was so threatening, that I could not bear to wait longer; for there seemed quite a call upon all Christians to be earnest in prayer, so much the more, as they thought they saw the Day of vengeance approaching. Under these circumstances it seemed wrong to withhold from you a privilege, for as a privilege I would entirely consider it. I wish to view it rather as a privilege than as a duty, because then all those perplexed questions are removed at once, which otherwise beset the mind, whether a man should come or

[1] James v. 13; Col. iii. 16.

not. Considering it in the light of a privilege, I am not obliged to blame a man for not coming. I say to him, If you cannot come, then you have a great loss. Very likely you are right in not coming; you have duties connected with your temporal calling which have a claim on you; you must serve like Martha, you have not the leisure of Mary. Well, be it so; still you have a loss, as Martha had while Mary was at Jesus' feet. You have a loss; I do not say God cannot make it up to you; doubtless He will bless every one who continues in the path of duty. He blessed Peter in prison, and Paul on the sea, as well as the mother of Mark, or the daughters of Philip. Doubtless, even in your usual employments you can be glorifying your Saviour; you can be thinking of Him; you can be thinking of those who are met together in worship; you can be following in your heart, as far as may be, the prayers they offer. Doubtless: only try to realize to yourself that continual prayer and praise *is* a privilege; only feel in good earnest, what somehow the mass of Christians, after all, do not recognize, that "it is good to be here"—feel as the early Christians felt when persecution hindered them from meeting, or, as holy David, when he cried out, "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the Living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"[1] feel this, and I shall not be solicitous about your coming; you will come if you can.

With these thoughts in my mind, I determined to offer to God the Daily Service here myself, in order

[1] Ps. xlii. 2.

that all might have the opportunity of coming before Him who would come; to offer it, not waiting for a congregation, but independently of all men, as our Church sanctions; to set the example, and to save you the need of waiting for one another; and at least to give myself, with the early Christians, and St. Peter on the house-top, the benefit, if not of social, at least of private prayer, as becomes the Christian priesthood. It is quite plain that far the greater part of our Daily Service, though more fitted for a congregation than for an individual (as indeed is the Lord's Prayer itself), may yet be used, as the Lord's Prayer is used, by even one person. Such is our Common Prayer viewed in itself, and our Church has in the Introduction to it expressly directed this use of it. It is there said, "All priests and deacons are to say daily the morning and evening prayer, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness, or some other urgent cause." Again, "The curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that people may come to hear God's word and to pray with him." Now, doubtless, there are many reasons which may render the strict observances of these rules inexpedient in this or that place or time. The very disuse of them will be a reason for reviving them very cautiously and gradually; the paucity of clergy is another reason for suspending them. Still there they remain in the Prayer-Book—

obsolete they cannot become, nay, even though torn from the book in some day of rebuke (to suppose what should hardly even be supposed), they still would have power, and live unto God. If prayers were right three centuries since, they are right now. If a Christian minister might suitably offer up common prayer by himself then, surely he may do so now. If he was then the spokesman of the saints far and near, gathering together their holy and concordant suffrages, and presenting them by virtue of his priesthood, he is so now. The revival of this usage is merely a matter of place and time; and though neither our Lord nor His Church would have us make sudden alterations, even though for the better, yet certainly we ought never to forget what is abstractedly our duty, what is in itself best, what it is we have to aim at and labour towards. If authority were needed, besides our Church's own, for the propriety of Christian Ministers praying even by themselves in places of worship, we have it in the life of our great pattern of Christian faith and wisdom, Hooker. "To what he persuaded others," says his biographer, "he added his own example of fasting and prayer; and did usually every Ember week take from the parish clerk the key of the church-door, into which place he retired every day, and locked himself up for many hours; and did the like most Fridays, and other days of fasting."

That holy man, in this instance, kept his prayers to himself. He was not offering up the Daily Service; but I adduce his instance to show that there is nothing strange or unseemly in a Christian minister praying in

church by himself; and if so, much less when he gives his people the opportunity of coming if they will. *This*, then, is what I felt and feel:—it is commonly said, when week-day prayers are spoken of, "You will not get a congregation, or you will get but a few;" but they whom Christ has brought near to Himself to be the Stewards of His Mysteries depend on no man; rather, after His pattern, they are to draw men after them. He prayed alone on the mountain; He prays alone (for who shall join with Him?) in His Father's presence. He is the one effectual Intercessor for sinners at the right hand of God. And what He is really, such are we in figure; what He is meritoriously, such are we instrumentally. Such are we by His grace; allowed to occupy His place visibly, however unworthily, in His absence, till He come; allowed to depend on Him, and not on our people; allowed to draw our commission from Him, not from them; allowed to be centres, about which the Church may grow, and about which it really exists, be it great or little.

Therefore, in beginning and continuing the Daily Service, I do not, will not measure the effect produced, by appearances. If we wait till all the world are worshippers, we must wait till the world is new made; but, if so, who shall draw the line, and say, how many are enough to pray together, when He has told us that His flock is little, and that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in the midst of them? So I account a few met together in prayer to be a type of His true Church; not actually His true Church (God forbid the presumption!) but as a token and type of it;

—not *as being* His elect, one by one, for who can know whom He has chosen but He who chooses?—not *as* His elect for certain, for it may be a man's duty to be away, as Martha was in her place when serving, and only faulty when she thought censoriously of Mary;—not as His complete flock, doubtless, for that were to exclude the old, and the sick, and the infirm, and little children;—not as His select and undefiled remnant, for Judas was one of the twelve—still as the earnest and promise of His Saints, the birth of Christ in its rudiments, and the dwelling-place of the Spirit; and precious, even though but one out of the whole number, small though it be, belong at present to God's hidden ones; nay, though, as is likely to be the case, in none of them there be more than the dawn of the True Light and the goings forth of the morning.—Some, too, will come at times, as accident guides them, giving promise that they may one day be settled and secured within the sacred fold. Some will come in times of grief or compunction, others in preparation for the Holy Communion.[1] Nor is it a service for those only who are present; all men know the time, and many mark it, whose bodily presence is away. We have with us the hearts of many. Those who are conscious they are absent in the path of duty, will naturally turn their thoughts to the Church at the stated hour, and thence to God. They will recollect

[1] It may be suggested here, that week-day services (with fasting) are the appropriate attendants on weekly communion, which has lately been advocated, especially in the impressive sermons of Mr. Dodsworth. When the one observance is used without the other, either the sacredness of the Lord's day is lost, from its wanting a peculiar Service, or the Eucharist is in danger of profanation, from its frequency leading us to remissness in preparing for it.

what prayers are then in course, and they will have fragments of them rising on their minds amid their worldly business. They will call to mind the day of the month, and the psalms used on it, and the chapters of Scripture then read out to the people. How pleasant to the wayfaring man, on his journey, to think of what is going on in his own Church! How soothing and consolatory to the old and infirm who cannot come, to follow in their thoughts, nay, with the prayers and psalms before them, what they do not hear! Shall not those prayers and holy meditations, separated though they be in place, ascend up together to the presence of God? Shall not they be with their minister in spirit, who are provoked unto prayer by his service? Shall not their prayers unite in one before the Mercy-seat, sprinkled with the Atoning Blood, as a pure offering of incense unto the Father, and an acceptable sacrifice both for the world of sinners and for His purchased Church? Who then will dare speak of loneliness and solitude, because in man's eyes there are few worshippers brought together in one place? or, who will urge it as a defect in our Service, even if that were the case? Who, moreover, will so speak, when even the Holy Angels are present when we pray, stand by us as guardians, sympathize in our need, and join us in our praises?

When thoughts such as these are set before the multitude of men, they appear to some of them strained and unnatural; to others, formal, severe, and tending to bondage. So must it be. Christ's commands will seem to be a servitude, and His privileges will be strange, till

we act upon the one and embrace the other. To those who come in faith, to receive and to obey, who, instead of standing at a distance, reasoning, criticising, investigating, adjusting, hear His voice and follow Him, not knowing whither they go; who throw themselves, their hearts and wills, their opinions and conduct, into His Divine System with a noble boldness, and serve Him on a venture, without experience of results, or skill to defend their own confidence by argument: who, when He says "Pray," "Continue in prayer," take His words simply, and forthwith pray, and that instantly; these men, through His great mercy and the power of the Holy Ghost working in them, will at length find persevering prayer, praise, and intercession, neither a bondage nor a barrenness. But it is in the nature of things that Christ's word must be a law *while* it is good tidings. That very message of good tidings, that Christ saves sinners, is no good tidings to those who have not a heart to abandon sin; and as no one, by nature, has this good heart, and, even under grace, no one obtains it except gradually, there must ever be a degree of bondage in the Gospel, till, by obeying the Law and creating within us a love of God and holiness, we, by little and little, enter into the meaning of His promises.

May He lead us on evermore in the narrow way, who is the One Aid of all that need, the Helper of all that flee to Him for succour, the Life of them that believe, and the Resurrection of the dead!

SERMON XXII.

THE GOOD PART OF MARY.

LUKE x. 41, 42.

"*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her.*"

EVERY word of Christ is good; it has its mission and its purpose, and does not fall to the ground.[1] It cannot be that He should ever speak transitory words, who is Himself the very Word of God, uttering, at His good pleasure, the deep counsels and the holy will of Him who is invisible. Every word of Christ is good; and did we receive a record of His sayings even from ordinary men, yet we might be sure as to whatever was thus preserved, whether spoken to disciple or enemy, whether by way of warning, advice, rebuke, comfort, argument, or condemnation, that nothing had a merely occasional meaning, a partial scope and confined range, nothing regarded merely the moment, or the accident, or the audience; but all His sacred speeches, though clothed in a temporary garb, and serving an immediate end, and difficult, in consequence, to disen-

[1] Basil, Const. Mon. 1.

gage from what is temporary in them and immediate, yet all have their force in every age, abiding in the Church on earth, "enduring for ever in heaven," and running on into eternity. They are our rule, "holy, just, and good," "the lantern of our feet and the light of our paths," in this very day as fully and as intimately as when they were first pronounced.

And if this had been so, though mere human diligence had gathered up the crumbs from His table, much more sure are we of the value of what is recorded of Him, receiving it, as we do, not from man, but from God. The Holy Ghost, who came to glorify Christ, and inspired the Evangelists to write, did not trace out for us a barren Gospel; but doubtless, praised be His name, selected and saved for us those words which were to have an especial usefulness in after times, those words which might be the Church's law, in faith, conduct, and discipline; not a law written in tables of stone, but a law of faith and love, of the spirit, not of the letter; a law for willing hearts, who could bear to "live by every word," however faint and low, "which proceeded from His mouth," and who out of the seeds which the Heavenly Sower scattered, could foster into life a Paradise of Divine Truth. Let us then humbly try with this thought before us, and the help of His grace, to gain some benefit from the text.

Martha and Mary were the sisters of Lazarus, who was afterwards raised from the dead. All three lived together, but Martha was mistress of the house. St. Luke mentions, in a verse preceding the text, that Christ came to a certain village, "and a certain woman,

named Martha, received Him into her house." Being then at the head of a family, she had duties which necessarily engaged her time and thoughts. And on the present occasion she was especially busy, from a wish to do honour to her Lord. "Martha was cumbered about much serving." On the other hand, her sister was free from the necessity of worldly business, by being the younger. "She had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." The same distinction, at once of duty and character, appears in the narrative of Lazarus' death and restoration, as contained in St. John's Gospel. "Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him; but Mary sat still in the house."[1] Afterwards Martha "went her way and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Again, in the beginning of the following chapter, "There they made Him a supper; and Martha served. . . . . Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair."[2] In these passages the same general difference between the sisters presents itself, though in a different respect;—Martha still directs and acts, while Mary is the retired and modest servant of Christ, who, at liberty from worldly duties, loves to sit at His feet and hear His voice, and silently honours Him with her best, without obtruding herself upon His sacred presence.

To return:—"Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not

[1] John xi. 20. [2] John xii. 2, 3.

care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her," in the words of the text, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

I shall draw two observations from this incident, and our Saviour's comment on it.

1. First, it would appear from hence, on His own authority, that there are two ways of serving Him—by active business, and by quiet adoration. Not, of course, that He speaks of those who call themselves His servants and are not; who counterfeit the one or the other manner of life; either those who are "choked with the cares of this world," or those who lie idle and useless as the hard way-side, and "bring no fruit to perfection." Nor, again, as if His words implied that any Christians were called to nothing but religious worship, or any to nothing but active employment. There are busy men and men of leisure, who have no part in Him; there are others, who are not without fault, as altogether sacrificing leisure to business, or business to leisure. But putting aside the thought of the untrue and of the extravagant, still after all there remain two classes of Christians;—those who are like Martha, those like Mary; and both of them glorify Him in their own line, whether of labour or of quiet, in either case proving themselves to be not their own, but bought with a price, set on obeying, and constant in obeying His will. If they labour, it is for His sake; and if they adore, it is still from love of Him.

And further, these two classes of His disciples do not choose for themselves their course of service, but are allotted it by Him. Martha might be the elder, Mary the younger. I do not say that it is never left to a Christian to choose his own path, whether he will minister with the Angels or adore with the Seraphim; often it is: and well may he bless God if he has it in his power freely to choose that good portion which our Saviour especially praises. But, for the most part, each has his own place marked out for him, if he will take it, in the course of His providence; at least there can be no doubt *who* are intended for worldly cares. The necessity of getting a livelihood, the calls of a family, the duties of station and office, these are God's tokens, tracing out Martha's path for the many. Let me, then, dismiss the consideration of the many, and rather mention who they are who may be considered as called to the more favoured portion of Mary; and in doing so I shall more clearly show what that portion is.

First, I instance the Old, as is natural, whose season of business is past, and who seem to be thereby reminded to serve God by prayer and contemplation. Such was Anna; "she was of a great age, ... and was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."[1] Here we see both the description of person called, and the occupation itself. Further, observe, it was the promises stored in Christ the Saviour, which were the object, towards which her service had respect. When He was brought into

[1] Luke ii. 36, 37.

the Temple, she "gave thanks to the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Again, the same description of person, certainly the same office, is set before us in the parable of the importunate widow. "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that we ought always to pray and not to faint."[1] The widow said; "Avenge me of mine adversary." "And shall not God avenge His own elect," our Lord asks, "which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?" Add to these St. Paul's description: "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day."[2]

Next those, who minister at the Altar, are included in Mary's portion. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee," says the Psalmist, "that He may dwell in Thy courts."[3] According to the Apostles' rule, the Deacons were to minister the worldly matters of the Church, the Evangelists were to go among the heathen, the Bishops were to govern; but the Elders were to remain, more or less, in the very bosom of the Lord's people, in the courts of His house, in the services of His worship, "executing the priest's office," as we read in the book of Acts,[4] offering up the Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, teaching, catechising, but not busy or troubled with the world. I do not mean that these distinct offices were never united in one person, but that they were, in themselves distinct, and that the tendency of the

[1] Luke xviii. 1.
[2] 1 Tim. v. 5.
[3] Ps. lxv. 4.
[4] Acts xiii. 2.

Apostles' discipline was to separate off from the multitude of Christian Ministers certain who should serve God and the Church by giving thanks, and intercession.

And next, I may mention Children as in some respects partakers of Mary's portion. Till they go out into the world, whether into its trades or its professions, their school-time should be, in some sort, a contemplation of their Lord and Saviour. Doubtless they cannot enter into sacred subjects as steadily as is possible afterwards; they must not be unnaturally compelled to serve, and they are to be exercised in active habits of obedience, and in a needful discipline for the future; still, after all, we must not forget that He, who is the pattern of children as well as grown men, was, at twelve years old, found in His Father's House; and that afterwards, when He came thither before His passion, the children welcomed Him with the words, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and fulfilled a prophecy, and gained His praise, in so doing.

Further, we are told, on St. Paul's authority (if that be necessary on so obvious a point), that Mary's portion is allotted, more or less, to the unmarried. I say more or less, for Martha herself, though unmarried, yet as mistress of a household, was in a measure an exception; and because servants of God, as St. Paul, may remain unmarried, not to labour less, but to labour more directly for the Lord. St. Paul's words, some have observed, almost appear to refer to the language used in the text, when read in the original Greek; which is the more likely, as St. Luke was an attendant on the Apostle,

and his Gospel seems to be cited elsewhere by him. As if he said, "The unmarried careth for the things of the Lord, so as to be holy both in body and in spirit. And this I speak for your own profit, that ye may sit at the Lord's feet without being cumbered."

And further still, there are vast numbers of Christians, in Mary's case, who are placed in various circumstances, and of whom no description can well be given; rich men having leisure, or active men during seasons of leisure, as when they leave their ordinary work for recreation's sake. Certainly our Lord meant that some or other of His servants should be ever worshipping Him in every place, and that not in their hearts merely, but with the ceremonial of devotion. St. Paul says, "I will therefore that men," even that sex whose especial punishment it was that they should "eat bread in the sweat of their face," "that men pray every where, *lifting up holy hands*," in common and public worship, "without wrath and doubting."[1] And we find, accordingly, that even a Roman Centurion, Cornelius, had found time, amid his military duties, to serve God continually, before he became a Christian, and was rewarded with the knowledge of the Gospel in consequence. "He prayed to God alway," we are told, and his "prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God."[2]

And last of all, in Mary's portion, doubtless, are included the souls of those who have lived and died in the faith and fear of Christ. Scripture tells us that "they rest from their labours;"[3] and in the same

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 8. [2] Acts x. 4. [3] Rev. xiv. 13.

sacred book, that their employment is prayer and praise. While God's servants below cry to Him day and night in every place; these "serve Him day and night in His temple" above, and from their resting-place beneath the altar intercede, with loud voice, for those holy interests which they have left behind them. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" "We give Thee thanks, because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned."[1]

This then is the company of those who stand in Mary's lot;—the Aged and the Children—the Unmarried and the Priests of God—and the spirits of the just made perfect, all with one accord, like Moses on the Mount, lifting up holy hands to God, while their brethren fight, or meditating on the promises, or hearing their Saviour's teaching, or adorning and beautifying His worship.

2. Such being the two-fold character of Christian obedience, I observe, secondly, that Mary's portion is the better of the two. Our Lord does not expressly say so, but He clearly implies it: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." If His words be taken literally, they might, indeed, even mean that Martha's heart was not right with Him, which, it is plain from other parts of the history, they do not mean. Therefore, what He intimated surely was, that Martha's

[1] Rev. vi. 10; xi. 17.

portion was full of snares, as being one of worldly labour, but that Mary could not easily go wrong in hers; that we may be busy in a wrong way, we cannot well adore Him except in a right one; that to serve God by prayer and praise continually, when we can do so consistently with other duties, is the pursuit of the "one thing needful," and emphatically "that good part which shall not be taken away from us."

It is impossible to read St. Paul's Epistles carefully without perceiving how faithfully they comment on this rule of our Lord's. Is it doubtful to any one, that they speak much and often of the duties of worship, meditation, thanksgiving, prayer, praise, and intercession; and in such a way as to lead the Christian, so far as other duties will allow him, to make them the ordinary employment of his life? not, indeed, to neglect his lawful calling, nor even to be content without some active efforts to do good, whether in the way of education of the young, attendance on the sick and needy, pastoral occupation, study, or other toil, yet to devote himself to a life at Jesus' feet, and a continual hearing of His word? And is it not plainly a privilege, above other privileges, if we really love Him, to be called to this unearthly life? Consider the following passages, in addition to those already quoted, and see if they can possibly be completely realized in the life of the common run of Christians, though all, doubtless, must cultivate inwardly, and in due measure bring into outward act, the spirit which they enjoin. See if they be not illustrations of that more blessed portion with which Mary was favoured. "Continue in prayer, watching

in it with thanksgiving."[1] "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to he Lord."[2] "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in every thing give thanks, . . . quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings."[3] "I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands."[4] "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to each other in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always, for all things, unto God our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."[5] "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, . . . taking the shield of faith, . . . and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."[6] Thus St. Paul speaks: in like manner St. Peter, "casting all your care" (such as Martha's) "upon Him, for He is concerned for you."[7] "Abstain from wine, that you may pray;"[8] and St. James, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."[9]

These are the injunctions of the Apostles; next, observe how they were fulfilled in the early Church. Before the Comforter came down, they "all (the

[1] Col. iv. 2. [2] Col. iii. 16 [3] 1 Thess. v. 16–20.
[4] 1 Tim. ii. 8. [5] Eph. v. 18–20. [6] Eph. vi. 14–18.
[7] 1 Pet. v. 7. [8] 1 Pet. iv. 7. [9] James v. 13.

Apostles) *continued*," St. Paul's very word in the passages above cited, they persevered steadily, they endured, "with one accord, in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." And so, after Pentecost; "They *continuing*" — the same word — steadfastly enduring, "daily with one accord, in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God."[1] That early privilege, we know, was soon taken from them as a body. Persecution arose, and they were "scattered"[2] to and fro, over the earth. Henceforth Martha's portion befell them. They were full of labours, whether pleasant or painful;—pleasant, for they had to preach the Gospel over the earth—but painful as losing, not only earthly comforts, but, in some sort, spiritual quietness. They were separated from the Ordinances of Divine grace, as wanderers in a wilderness. Here and there, as they journeyed, they met a few of their brethren, "prophets and teachers, ministering to the Lord" at Antioch; or Philip's daughters, "virgins, which did prophesy"[3] at Cæsarea. They met for worship in secret, fearing their enemies; and in course of time, when the fire of persecution became fiercer, they fled to the deserts, and there set up houses for God's service. Thus Mary's portion was withheld from the Church for many years, while it laboured and suffered. St. Paul himself, that great Apostle, though he had his seasons of privilege, when he was caught up into the third heaven, and heard the hymns

[1] Acts i. 14; ii. 46. [2] Acts viii. 1. [3] Acts xiii. 2; xxi. 9.

of Angels, yet he, too, was a man of contention and toil. He fought for the Truth, and so laid the foundations of the Temple. He was "sent to preach, not to baptize." He was not allowed to build the House of God, for he was, in figure, like David, a "man of blood." He did but bring together into one the materials for the Sacred Building. The Order of the Ministry, the Succession of Apostles, the Services of Worship, the Rule of Discipline, all that is calm, beautiful, and soothing in our Holy Religion, was brought forth piecemeal, out of his writings, by his friends and fellow-disciples, in his own day, and in the time after him, as the state of the Church admitted.

Accordingly, as peace was in any measure enjoyed, so the building was carried on, here and there, at this time and that, in the cavern, or the desert, or the mountain, where God's stray servants lived; till a time of peace came, and by the end of three hundred years the work was accomplished. From that time onwards to the present day, Mary's lot has been offered to vast multitudes of Christians, if they could receive it. If they knew their blessedness, there are numbers now, in various ranks of society, who might enjoy the privilege of continual praise and prayer, and a seat at Jesus' feet. Doubtless they are, after all, but the few: for the great body of Christians have but the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and would be deserting their duty if they lived on other days as on it. But what is not granted to some, is granted to others, to serve God in His Temple, and be at rest. Who these favoured persons are, has already been said generally;

which is all that can be said in a matter in which every one must decide for himself, according to his best light and his own peculiar case. Yet surely, without attempting to pronounce upon individuals, so far at least we may say, that if there be an age when Mary's portion is altogether let alone and decried, that age is necessarily so far a stranger to the spirit of the Gospel.

Let me then, in conclusion, ask, for our edification, whether perchance this is not such an age? I say "perchance;" because in matters of this kind, men show their motives and principles less openly than in other matters, as being of a nature more immediately lying between themselves and God. Yet, taking account of this, at least is not this an age in which few persons are in a condition, from the very state of society, to "give themselves continually to prayer" and other direct religious services? Has not the desire of wealth so eaten into our hearts, that we think poverty the worst of ills, that we think the security of property the first of blessings, that we measure all things by mammon, that we not only labour for it ourselves, but so involve in our own evil earnestness all around us, that they cannot keep from the pursuit of it though they would? Does not the frame-work of society move forward on such a plan as to enlist into the service of the world all its members, almost whether they will or no? Would not a man be thought unaspiring and unproductive, who cared not to push forward in pursuit of that which Scripture calls "the root of all evil," the love of which it calls "covetousness which is idolatry," and the pos-

session of which it solemnly declares all but excludes a man from the kingdom of Heaven? Alas! can this be denied? And therefore, of course, the entire system of tranquil devotion, holy meditation, freedom from worldly cares, which our Saviour praises in the case of Mary, is cast aside, misunderstood, or rather missed altogether, as much as the glorious sunshine by a blind man, slandered and ridiculed as something contemptible and vain. Surely, no one, who is candid, can doubt, that, were Mary now living, did she choose on principle that state of life in which Christ found her, were she content to remain at Jesus' feet hearing His word and disengaged from this troublesome world, she would be blamed and pitied. Careless men would gaze strangely, and wise men compassionately, on such an one, as wasting her life, and choosing a melancholy, cheerless portion. Long ago was this the case. Even in holy Martha, zealous as she was and true-hearted, even in her instance we are reminded of the impatience and disdain with which those who are far different from her, the children of this world, regard such as dedicate themselves to God. Long ago, even in her, we seem to witness, as in type, the rash, unchristian way in which this age disparages devotional services. Do we never hear it said, that the daily Service of the Church is unnecessary? Is it never hinted that it is scarcely worth while to keep it up unless we get numbers to attend it, as if one single soul, if but one, were not precious enough for Christ's love and His Church's rearing? Is it never objected, that a partially-filled Church is a discouraging sight, as if, after all, our Lord

Jesus had chosen the many and not the few to be His true disciples? Is it never maintained, that a Christian minister is off his post unless he is for ever labouring for the heartless many, instead of ministering to the more religious few? Alas! there must be something wrong among us; when our defenders recommend the Church on the mere plea of its activity, its popularity, and its visible usefulness, and would scarcely scruple to give us up, had we *not* the many on our side! If our ground of boasting be, that rich men, and mighty men, and many men love us, it never can be a religious boast, and may be our condemnation. Christ made His feast for "the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." It is the widow and the fatherless, the infirm, the helpless, the devoted, bound together in prayer, who are the strength of the Church. It is their prayers, be they many or few, the prayers of Mary and such as Mary, who are the safety, under Christ, of those who with Paul and Barnabas fight the Lord's battles. "It is but lost labour to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows," if prayers are discontinued. It is mere infatuation, if we think to resist the enemies who at this moment are at our doors, if our Churches remain shut, and we give up to prayer but a few minutes in the day.

Blessed indeed are they whom Christ calls near to Him to be His own peculiar attendants and familiar friends; more blessed if they obey and fulfil their calling! Blessed even if they are allowed to seize intervals of such service towards Him; but favoured and honoured beyond thought, if they can, without

breach of duty, put aside worldly things with full purpose of heart, renounce the pursuit of wealth, keep clear of family cares, and present themselves as a holy offering, without spot or blemish, to Him who died for them.[1] These are they who "follow Him whithersoever He goeth," and to them He more especially addresses those lessons of faith and resignation which are recorded in His Gospel. "Take heed," he says, "and beware of covetousness, for man's life consisteth not in the over-abundance of the things which he possesseth. Take no care for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on. Consider the lilies how they grow, they toil not, they spin not. Seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye unsettled; for all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Verily

[1] The life here advocated is one of which Prayer, Praise, Intercession, and other devotional services, are made the object and business, in the same sense in which a certain profession or trade is the object and business of life to the mass of men: one in which devotion is *the* end to which everything else gives way. This explanation will answer the question, *how much* of each day it supposes set aside for devotion. Callings of this world do not necessarily occupy the whole, or half, or a third of our time, but they *rule* and *dispose* of the whole of it.

I say unto you, that He will gird Himself"—He who on earth has let them sit at His feet hearing His word, or let them anoint His feet with ointment, kissing them, He in turn, as He did before His passion, by an inexpressible condescension, "will gird Himself; and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."[1]

[1] Luke xii. 15–40.

SERMON XXIII.

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP A REMEDY FOR EXCITEMENTS.

JAMES v. 13.

"Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

ST. JAMES seems to imply in these words that there is that in religious worship which supplies all our spiritual need, which suits every mood of mind and every variety of circumstances, over and above the heavenly and supernatural assistance which we are allowed to expect from it. Prayer and praise seem in his view to be an universal remedy, a panacea, as it is called, which ought to be used at once, whatever it be that affects us. And, as is implied in ascribing to them this universal virtue, they produce very opposite effects, according to our need; allaying or carrying off the fever of the mind, as the case may be. The Apostle is not speaking of *sin* in the text; he speaks of the *emotions* of the mind, whether joyful or sorrowful, of good and bad spirits; and for these and all other such disturbances, prayer and praise are a medicine. Sin indeed has its appropriate remedies too, and more serious ones; penitence, self-abasement, self-revenge, mortification,

and the like. But the text supposes the case of a Christian, not of a mere penitent—not of scandalous wickedness, but of emotion, agitation of mind, regret, longing, despondency, mirthfulness, transport, or rapture; and in case of such ailments it says, prayer and praise is the remedy.

Indisposition of body shows itself in a *pain* somewhere or other;—a distress, which draws our thoughts to it, centres them upon it, impedes our ordinary way of going on, and throws the mind off its balance. Such too is indisposition of the soul, of whatever sort, be it passion or affection, hope or fear, joy or grief. It takes us off from the clear contemplation of the next world, ruffles us, and makes us restless. In a word, it is what we call an excitement of mind. Excitements are the indisposition of the mind; and of these excitements in different ways the services of divine worship are the proper antidotes. How they are so, shall now be considered.

1. Excitements are of two kinds, secular and religious: First, let us consider secular excitements. Such is the pursuit of gain, or of power, or of distinction. Amusements are excitements; the applause of a crowd, emulations, hopes, risks, quarrels, contests, disappointments, successes. In such cases the object pursued naturally absorbs the mind, and excludes all thoughts but those relating to itself. Thus a man is sold over into bondage to this world. He has one idea, and one only before him, which becomes his idol. Day by day he is engrossed by this one thing, to which his hear pays worship. It may attract him through the imagi-

nation, or through the reason; it may appeal to his heart, or to his self-interest, or to his pride; still, whether we be young or old, rich or poor, each age, each fortune is liable to its own peculiar excitement, which has power to fascinate the eye of our minds, to enervate and destroy us. Not all at once (God forbid!), but by a gradual process, till every thought of religion is lost before the contemplation of this nearer good.

The most ordinary of these excitements, at least in this country, is the pursuit of gain. A man may live from week to week in the fever of a decent covetousness, to which he gives some more specious name (for instance, desire of doing his duty by his family), till the heart of religion is eaten out of him. He may live and die in his farm or in his merchandise. Or he may be labouring for some distinction, which depends on his acquitting himself well on certain trying occasions, and requires a laborious preparation beforehand. Or he may be idly carried away by some light object of sense, which fills his mind with empty dreams and with pains which profit not. Or he may be engaged in the general business of life; be full of schemes and projects, of political manœuvres and efforts, of hate, or jealousy, or resentment, or triumph. He may be busy in managing, persuading, outwitting, resisting other men. Again, he may be in one or other of these states, not for a life, but for a season; and this is the more general case. Anyhow, *while* he is so circumstanced, whether for a longer or a shorter season, this will hold good—viz., the thought of religion is

excluded by the force of the excitement which is on him.

Now, then, observe what is the remedy. "Is any afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Here we see one very momentous use of prayer and praise to all of us; it breaks the current of worldly thoughts. And this is the singular benefit of stated worship, that it statedly interferes with the urgency of worldly excitements. Our daily prayer, morning and evening, suspends our occupations of time and sense. And especially the daily prayers of the Church do this. I say especially, because a man, amid the business of life, is often tempted to defraud himself of his private devotions by the pressure of engagements. He has not many minutes to give to them; and if by accident they are broken in upon, the season is gone and lost. But the public Service is of a certain length, and cannot be interrupted; and it is long enough to calm and steady the mind. Scripture must be read, psalms must be sung, prayers must be offered; every thing comes in course. I say, it is impossible (under God's blessing) for any one to attend the Daily Service of the Church "with reverence and godly fear," and a wish and effort to give his thoughts to it, and not find himself thereby sobered and brought to recollection. What kinder office is there, when a man is agitated, than for a friend to put his hand upon him by way of warning, to startle and recall him? It often has the effect of saving us from angry words, or extravagant talking, or inconsiderate jesting, or rash resolves. And such is the blessed effect of the sacred Services on

Christians busied about many things; reminding them of the one thing needful, and keeping them from being drawn into the great whirlpool of time and sense.

This, let it be observed, is one important benefit arising from the institution of the Lord's day. Over and above the privilege of being allowed one day in seven for religious festivity, the Christian may accept it as a merciful break in upon his usual employments, lest they should engross him. Most men, indeed, perceive this; they will feel wearied with the dust of this world when Saturday comes, and understand it to be a mercy that they are not obliged to go on toiling without cessation. But still, there are many who, if it were not an express ordinance of religion, would feel tempted, or think it their duty, to continue their secular labours, even though the custom of society allowed them to rest. Many, as it is, are so tempted; that is, at times, when they have some pressing object in view, and think they cannot afford to lose a day: and many always—such, for instance, as are in certain professions, which are not regulated (as trade is, more or less) by times and places. And great numbers, it is to be feared, yield to the temptation; and the evil effect of it shows itself in various miserable ways, even in the overthrow of their health and reason. In all these cases, then, the weekly Services of prayer and praise come to us as a gracious relief, a pause from the world, a glimpse of the third heaven, lest the world should rob us of our hope, and enslave us to that hard master who is plotting our eternal destruction.

You see, then, how secular excitements are remedied

by religious worship; viz., by breaking them up, and disabling them.

2. Next, let us consider how religious excitements are set right by the same Divine medicine.

If we had always continued in the way of light and truth, obeying God from childhood, doubtless we should know little of those swellings and tumults of the soul which are so common among us. Men who have grown up in the faith and fear of God, have a calm and equable piety; so much so, that they are often charged on that very account with being dull, cold, formal, insensible, dead to the next world. Now, it stands to reason, that a man who has always lived in the contemplation and improvement of his Gospel privileges, will not feel that agitating surprise and vehemence of joy, which he would feel, and ought to feel, if he had never known anything of them before. The jailor, who for the first time heard the news of salvation through Christ, gave evident signs of transport. This certainly is natural and right; still it is a state of excitement, and, if I might say it, all states of excitement have dangerous tendencies. Hence one never can be sure of a new convert; for, in that elevated state of mind in which he is at first, the affections have much more sway than the reason or conscience; and unless he takes care, they may hurry him away, just as a wind might do, in a wrong direction. He is balanced on a single point, on the summit of an excited mind, and he may easily fall. However, though this danger would not exist, or, at least, not commonly or seriously, did men turn to God from early youth, yet, alas! in matter of fact they do not so turn; in matter

of fact they are open to the influence of excitement, when they begin to seek God; and the question is, what is then to be done with them?

Now, this advice is often given:—"Indulge the excitement; when you flag, seek for another; live upon the thought of God; go about doing good; let your light shine before men; tell them what God has done for your soul;"—by all which is meant, when we go into particulars, that they ought to fancy that they have something above all other men; ought to neglect their worldly calling, or at best only bear it as a cross; to join themselves to some particular set of religionists; to take part in this or that religious society; go to hear strange preachers, and obtrude their new feelings and new opinions upon others, at times proper and improper. I am speaking now of the temper, not of those who profess adherence to the Church, but of such as detach themselves, more or less, from its discipline; and the reason I allude to them is this. It is often said, that schism and dissent are but accidents of a religious temper; that they who fall into them, if pious, are the same in heart as Churchmen, only are divided by some outward difference of forms and circumstances. Not so; the mind of dissent, viewed in itself, is far other than the mind of Christ and His Holy Church Catholic; in whatever proportion it may or may not be realized in individuals. It is full of self-importance, irreverence, censoriousness, display, and tumult. It is right, therefore, ever to insist that it is different, lest men should be seduced into it, by being assured that it is not different.

That it is different from the mind and spirit of the early Christians at least, is quite plain from history. If there was a time, when those particular irregularities, which now are so common, were likely to abound, it was in the primitive Church. Men, who had lived all their lives in the pollutions of sin unspeakable, who had been involved in the darkness of heathenism, were suddenly brought to the light of Christian truth. Their sins were all freely forgiven them, clean washed away in the waters of Baptism. A new world of ideas was opened upon them; and the most astonishing objects presented to their faith. What a state of transport must have been theirs! We know it was so, by the account of such men in the book of Acts. The jailor "*rejoiced*, believing in God, with all his house." And what an excited and critical state was theirs! Critical and dangerous in proportion to its real blessedness; for, in proportion to the privileges we enjoy, ever will be our risk of misusing them. In spite, then, of their blessedness, they were in a state of risk, and that from the excitement of their minds. How then did they escape that enthusiasm which now prevails, that irreverence, immodesty, and rudeness? I say, if in any age that feverish spirit was likely to have prevailed, which now prevails, the early times of the Gospel was such; how is it we do not read generally of what happened in a measure and for a season in the Corinthian Church, of Christians disobeying their Rulers, saying that their own hearts were the best judges in religious matters, censuring those about them, taking teachers for themselves, and

so breaking up the Church of Christ into ten thousand parts? If at any time the outward frame-work of Christianity was in jeopardy, surely it was then. How was it the ungovernable elements within it did not burst forth and shiver to pieces the vessel which contained them? How was it, that for fifteen hundred years the Church was preserved from those peculiar affections of mind and irregularities of feeling and conduct, which now torment it like an ague?

Now certainly, looking at external and second causes, the miracles had much to do in securing this blessed sobriety in the early Christians. These kept them from wilfulness and extravagance, and tempered them to the spirit of godly fear. Thus St. Paul, when converted, was not let go by himself, so to speak. His merciful Lord kept His hand upon him, and directed his every step, lest he should start aside and go astray. Thus He would not tell him all at once what to do, though St. Paul wished it; but bade him "arise, and go into the city," and there it was to be told him what he was to do. He was *led by the hand* (a fit emblem of his spiritual condition), and brought to Damascus. Then he was three days without sight, and without meat and drink. During this time he was still kept in suspense and ignorance what was to happen, and was employed in praying. Such desolateness—his darkness, fasting, and suspense—had a sobering influence. Then Ananias was sent to him to baptize him. Forthwith he began to preach Christ at Damascus, but was soon checked, thwarted, sent into Arabia out of the way, for three years. Then he

returned to Damascus, and again, preaching Christ, was in no long time obliged to flee for his life. He came to Jerusalem, and began again to preach. Here first he had a difficulty in getting acknowledged by the Apostles, who were for a time afraid of him; then the Jews laid a plot to kill him. As he was praying in the Temple, Christ appeared to him, and bade him depart from Jerusalem. The brethren brought him down to Cæsarea; thence he went to Tarsus. Now, who does not see in this history how the Apostle was repressed and brought under by the plain commands and providences of God, hurrying him to and fro, without saying why? After all this, many years passed before he was employed to preach to the heathen, and then only after a solemn ordination.

Thus, God's miraculous providence, awing and controlling the heart, would seem to be one especial means by which the early Christians were kept from enthusiasm; and the persecutions of the Church became another. But the more ordinary means was one which we may enjoy at this day, if we choose: the course of religious Services, the round of prayer and praise, which, indeed, was also part of St. Paul's discipline, as we have seen, and which has a most gracious effect upon the restless and excited mind, giving it an outlet, yet withal calming, soothing, directing, purifying it.

To go into details. It often happens that in a family who have been brought up together, one suddenly takes what is called a religious turn. Such a person wishes to be more religious than the rest, wishes to do something more than ordinary, but does not know exactly

what to do. You will find, generally, that he joins himself to some dissenting party, mainly for this reason, to evidence to himself greater strictness. His mind is under excitement; he seems to say with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" This is the cause, again and again, of persons falling from the Church. And hence, a notion has got abroad that dissenting bodies have more of true religion within them than the Church; I say, for this reason, because earnest men, awaking to a sense of religion, wish to do something more than usual, and join sects and heresies as a relief to their minds, by way of ridding themselves of strong feelings, which, pent up within them, distress them. And I cannot deny, that in this way those bodies do gain, and the Church does lose, earnestly religious people, or rather those who would have been such in time; for it is, I fear, too true that, while the sects in question are in this way recruited and improved from the Church, the persons themselves, who join them, are injured. They lose the greater part of that religious light and warmth which hung about them, even though they have been hitherto careless, and but partially availed themselves of it. It is as if a living hand were to touch cold iron; the iron is somewhat warmed, but the hand is chilled. And thus the blossom of truth, the promise of real religion, is lost to the Church. Men begin well, but being seduced by their own waywardness fall away.

Here, then, if we knew how to employ them, the Services of the Church come in to soothe and guide the agitated mind. "Is any afflicted? let him pray: is

any merry? let him sing psalms." Is any in a perturbed state of mind? he need not go off to strange preachers and meetings, in order to relieve himself of his uneasiness. We can give him a stricter rule of life, and a safer one. Did not our Lord make a distinction between the life of Martha and that of Mary, and without disclaiming Martha, who was troubled for His sake with the toils of life, yet praise Mary the rather, who sat at His feet? Does not St. Paul make a distinction between the duties *necessary* for a Christian, and those which are *comely and of good report?* Let restless persons attend upon the worship of the Church, which will attune their minds in harmony with Christ's law, while it unburdens them. Did not St. Paul "pray" during his three days of blindness? Afterwards he was praying in the Temple, when Christ appeared to him. Let this be well considered. We may build Houses of God without number, up and down the land, as indeed our duty is; we may multiply resident ministers; we may (with a less commendable zeal) do our utmost to please the many or the wealthy; but all this will not deprive Dissenting bodies of their virtue and charm, such as it is. Their strength is their semblance of a strictness beyond members of the Church. Till we act up to our professed principles more exactly; till we have in deed and actual practice more frequent Services of praise and prayer, more truly Catholic plans for honouring God and benefiting man; till we exhibit the nobler and more beautiful forms of Christian devotedness for the admiration and guidance of the better sort, we have, in a manner, done nothing. Surely we want

something more than the material walls, we want the "spirit and truth" of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the worshippers "with one accord continuing in the Temple, with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God," persevering and prevailing in prayer, and thus, without seeking it, "having favour with all the people."

Is any one then desirous of gaining comfort to his soul, of bringing Christ's presence home to his very heart, and of doing the highest and most glorious things for the whole world? I have told him how to proceed. Let him praise God; let holy David's Psalter be as familiar words in his mouth, his daily service, ever repeated, yet ever new and ever sacred. Let him pray; especially let him intercede. Doubt not the power of faith and prayer to effect all things with God. However you try, you cannot do works to compare with those which faith and prayer accomplish in the name of Christ. Did you give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, you could not do so much as by continual intercession. Few are rich, few can suffer for Christ; all may pray. Were you an Apostle of the Church, or a Prophet, you could not do more than you can do by the power of prayer. Go not then astray to find out new modes of serving God and benefiting man. I show you "a more excellent way." Come to our Services; come to our Litanies; throw yourself out of your own selfish heart; pour yourself out upon the thought of sin and sinners, upon the contemplation of God's Throne, of Jesus the Mediator between God and man, and of that glorious Church to which the dispensation of His merits is committed.

Aspire to be what Christ would make you, His friend; having power with Him and prevailing. Other men will not pray for themselves. You may pray for them and for the general Church; and while you pray, you will find enough in the defects of your praying to remind you of your own nothingness, and to keep you from pride while you aim at perfection.

But I must draw to an end. Thus, in both ways, whether ır excitements arise from objects of this world or the next, praise and prayer will be, through God's mercy, our remedy; keeping the mind from running to waste; calming, soothing, sobering, steadying it; attuning it to the will of God and the mind of the Spirit, teaching it to love all men, to be cheerful and thankful, and to be resigned in all the dispensations of Providence towards us.

Oh that we knew our own true bliss, now that Christ is come, instead of being, as we still are, for the most part, like the heathen, as sheep without a shepherd! May the good Lord fulfil His purpose towards us in His own time! Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

INTERCESSION.

EPHES. vi. 18.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

EVERY one knows, who has any knowledge of the Gospel, that Prayer is one of its especial ordinances; but not every one, perhaps, has noticed what kind of prayer its inspired teachers most carefully enjoin. Prayer for self is the most obvious of duties, as soon as leave is given us to pray at all, which Christ distinctly and mercifully accorded, when He came. This is plain from the nature of the case; but He Himself has given us also an express command and promise about ourselves, to "ask and it shall be given to us." Yet it is observable, that though prayer for self is the first and plainest of Christian duties, the Apostles especially insist on another kind of prayer; prayer for others, for ourselves with others, for the Church, and for the world, that it may be brought into the Church. Intercession is the characteristic of Christian worship, the privilege of the heavenly adoption, the exercise of

the perfect and spiritual mind. This is the subject to which I shall now direct your attention.

1. First, let us turn to the express injunctions of Scripture. For instance, the text itself: "Praying in every season with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and abstaining from sleep for the purpose, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Observe the earnestness of the intercession here inculcated; "in every season," "with all supplication," and "to the loss of sleep." Again, in the Epistle to the Colossians; "Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving, withal praying for us also." Again, "Brethren, pray for us." And again in detail; "I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority. I will therefore that men pray in every place." On the other hand, go through the Epistles, and reckon up how many exhortations occur therein to pray merely for self. You will find there are few, or rather none at all. Even those which seem at first sight to be such, will be found really to have in view the good of the Church. Thus, to take the words following the text, St. Paul, in asking his brethren's prayers, seems to pray for himself: but he goes on to explain why—"that he might make known the Gospel:" or elsewhere—that "the word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified;" or, as where he says—"Let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret,"[1] for this, too, was a petition in order to the edification of the Church.

[1] Col. iv. 2; 1 Thess. v. 25; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 8; 2 Thess. iii. 1; 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

Next, consider St. Paul's own example, which is quite in accordance with his exhortations: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you." "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."[1]

The instances of prayer, recorded in the book of Acts, are of the same kind, being almost entirely of an intercessory nature, as offered at ordinations, confirmations, cures, missions, and the like. For instance; "As they interceded before the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them; and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Again, "And Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed: and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise."[2]

2. Such is the lesson taught us by the words and deeds of the Apostles and their brethren. Nor could it be otherwise, if Christianity be a social religion, as it is pre-eminently. If Christians are to live together, they will pray together; and united prayer is necessarily of an intercessory character, as being offered for each other

[1] Eph. i. 16, 17; Phil. i. 3, 4; Col. i. 3; 1 Thess. i. 2.
[2] Acts xiii. 2, 3; ix. 40.

and for the whole, and for self as one of the whole. In proportion, then, as unity is an especial Gospel-duty, so does Gospel-prayer partake of a social character; and Intercession becomes a token of the existence of a Church Catholic.

Accordingly, the foregoing instances of intercessory prayer are supplied by *Christians*. On the other hand, contrast with these the recorded instances of prayer in men who were *not* Christians, and you will find they are not intercessory. For instance: St. Peter's prayer on the house-top was, we know, answered by the revelation of the call of the Gentiles: viewing it then by the light of the texts already quoted, we may conclude, that, as was the anwer, such was the prayer—that it had reference to others. On the other hand, Cornelius, not yet a Christian, was also rewarded with an answer to his prayer. "Thy prayer is heard; call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; *he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.*" Can we doubt, from these words of the Angel, that his prayers had been offered for himself especially? Again, on St. Paul's conversion, we are told, "Behold, he prayeth." It is plain he was praying for himself; and observe, it was before he was a Christian. Thus, if we are to judge of the relative prominence of religious duties by the recorded instances of the performance of them, we should say that Intercession is the kind of prayer distinguishing a Christian from such as are not Christians.

3. But the instance of St. Paul opens upon us a second reason for this distinction. Intercession is the especial observance of the Christian, because he alone

is in a condition to offer it. It is the function of the justified and obedient, of the sons of God, "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit;" not of the carnal and unregenerate. This is plain even to natural reason. The blind man, who was cured, said of Christ, "We know that God heareth not sinners; but, if any man *be a worshipper of God and doeth His will*, him He heareth."[1] Saul the persecutor obviously could not intercede like St. Paul the Apostle. He had yet to be baptized and forgiven. It would be a presumption and an extravagance in a penitent, before his regeneration, to do aught but confess his sins and deprecate wrath. He has not yet proceeded, he has had no leave to proceed, out of himself; and has enough to do within. His conscience weighs heavy on him, nor has he "the wings of a dove to flee away and be at rest." We need not, I say, go to Scripture for information on so plain a point. Our first prayers ever must be for ourselves. Our own salvation is our personal concern; till we labour to secure it, till we try to live religiously, and pray to be enabled to do so, nay, and have made progress, it is but hypocrisy, or at best it is overbold, to busy ourselves with others. I do not mean that prayer for self always comes first in order of time, and Intercession second. Blessed be God, we were all made His children before we had actually sinned; we began life in purity and innocence. Intercession is never more appropriate than when sin had been utterly abolished, and the heart was most affectionate and least selfish. Nor would I deny, that a care for

[1] John ix. 31.

the souls of other men may be the first symptom of a man's beginning to think about his own; or that persons, who are conscious to themselves of much guilt, often pray for those whom they revere and love, when under the influence of fear, or in agony, or other strong emotion, and, perhaps, at other times. Still it is true, that there is something incongruous and inconsistent in a man's presuming to intercede, who is an habitual and deliberate sinner. Also it is true, that most men do, more or less, fall away from God, sully their baptismal robe, need the grace of repentance, and have to be awakened to the necessity of prayer for self, as the first step in observing prayer of any kind.

"God heareth not sinners;" nature tells us this; but none but God Himself could tell us that He will hear and answer those who are not sinners; for "when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, and can claim no reward for our services." But He has graciously promised us this mercy, in Scripture, as the following texts will show.

For instance, St. James says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much." St. John, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, *because we keep* His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."[1] Next let us weigh carefully our Lord's solemn announcements uttered shortly before His crucifixion, and, though addressed primarily to His Apostles, yet, surely, in their degree belonging to all who "believe on Him through their word." We

[1] James v. 16; 1 John iii. 22.

shall find that consistent obedience, mature, habitual, lifelong holiness, is therein made the condition of His intimate favour, and of power in Intercession. "If ye abide in Me," He says, "and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you; abide ye in My love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in My love. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you."[1] From this solemn grant of the peculiarly Gospel privilege of being the "friends" of Christ, it is certain, that as the prayer of repentance gains for us sinners Baptism and justification, so our higher gift of having power with Him and prevailing, depends on our "adding to our faith virtue."

Let us turn to the examples given us of holy men under former dispensations, whose obedience and privileges were anticipations of the evangelical. St. James, after the passage already cited from his epistle, speaks of Elijah thus: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." Righteous Job was appointed by Almighty God to be the effectual intercessor for his erring friends. Moses, who was

[1] John xv. 7-15.

"faithful in all the house" of God, affords us another eminent instance of intercessory power; as in the Mount, and on other occasions, when he pleaded for his rebellious people, or in the battle with Amalek, when Israel continued conquering as long as his hands remained lifted up in prayer. Here we have a striking emblem of that continued, earnest, unwearied prayer of men "lifting up *holy* hands," which, under the Gospel, prevails with Almighty God. Again, in the book of Jeremiah, Moses and Samuel are spoken of as mediators so powerful, that only the sins of the Jews were too great for the success of their prayers. In like manner it is implied, in the book of Ezekiel, that three such as Noah, Daniel, and Job, would suffice, in some cases, to save guilty nations from judgment. Sodom might have been rescued by ten. Abraham, though he could not save the abandoned city just mentioned, yet was able to save Lot from the overthrow; as at another time he interceded successfully for Abimelech. The very intimation given him of God's purpose towards Sodom was of course an especial honour, and marked him as the friend of God. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation; and all the nations of the world shall be blessed in him?" The reason follows, "*for I know him*, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him."[1]

[1] Gen. xviii. 17-19.

4. The history of God's dealings with Abraham will afford us an additional lesson, which must be ever borne in mind in speaking of the privilege of the saints on earth as intercessors between God and man. I can fancy a person, from apprehension lest the belief in it should interfere with the true reception of the doctrine of the Cross, perplexed at finding it in the foregoing texts so distinctly connected with obedience: I say *perplexed*, for I will not contemplate the case of those, though there are such, who, when the text of Scripture seems to them to be at variance with itself, and one portion to diverge from another, will not allow themselves to be perplexed, will not suspend their minds and humbly wait for light, will not believe that the Divine Scheme is larger and deeper than their own capacities, but boldly wrest into a factitious agreement what is already harmonious in God's infinite counsels, though not to them. I speak to perplexed persons; and would have them observe that Almighty God has, in this very instance of Abraham our spiritual father, been mindful of that other aspect under which the most highly exalted among the children of flesh must ever stand in His presence. It is elsewhere said of him, "Abraham *believed* in the Lord, and He counted it to Him for righteousness,"[1] as St. Paul points out, when he is discoursing upon the free grace of God in our redemption. Even Abraham was justified by faith, though he was perfected by works; and this being told us in the book of Genesis, seems as if an intimation to the perplexed inquirer that his difficulty can be but an

[1] Gen. xv. 6.

apparent one—that, while God reveals the one doctrine, He is not the less careful of the other also, nor rewards His servants (though He rewards them) for works done by their own strength. On the other hand, it is a caution to us, who rightly insist on the prerogatives imparted by his grace, ever to remember that it is grace only that ennobles and exalts us in His sight. Abraham is our spiritual father; and as he is, so are his children. In us, as in him, faith must be the foundation of all that is acceptable with God. "By faith we stand," by faith we are justified, by faith we obey, by faith our works are sanctified. Faith applies to us again and again the grace of our Baptism; faith opens upon us the virtue of all other ordinances of the Gospel—of the Holy Communion, which is the highest. By faith we prevail "in the hour of death and in the day of judgment." And the distinctness and force with which this is told us in the Epistles, and its obviousness, even to our natural reason, may be the cause why less stress is laid in them on the duty of prayer for self. The very instinct of faith will lead a man to do this without set command, and the Sacraments secure its observance.—So much then, by way of caution, on the influence of faith upon our salvation, furthering it, yet not interfering with the distinct office of works in giving virtue to our intercession.

And here let me observe on a peculiarity of Scripture, its speaking as if separate rewards attended on separate graces, according to our Lord's words, "To him that hath more shall be given;" so that what has been said in contrasting faith and works, is but one

instance under a general rule. Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes are pronounced on separate virtues respectively. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" and the rest in like manner. I am not attempting to determine what these particular graces are, what the rewards, what the aptitude of the one to the other, what the real connection between the reward and the grace, or how far one grace can be separated from another in fact. We know that all depend on one root, faith, and are but differently developed in different persons. Again, we see in Scripture that the same reward is not invariably assigned to the same grace, as if, from the intimate union between all graces, their rewards might (as it were) be lent and interchanged one with another; yet enough is said there to direct our minds to the existence of the principle itself, though we be unable to fathom its meaning and consequences. It is somewhat upon this principle that our Articles ascribe justification to faith *only*, as a symbol of the free grace of our redemption; just as in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, our Lord would seem to impute it to self-abasement, and in His words to the "woman which was a sinner," to love as well as to faith, while St. James connects it with works. In other instances the reward follows in the course of nature. Thus the gift of wisdom is the ordinary result of trial borne religiously; courage, of endurance. In this way St. Paul draws out a series of spiritual gifts one from another, experience from patience, hope from experience, boldness and confidence

from hope. I will add but two instances from the Old Testament. The commandment says, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long;" a promise which was signally fulfilled in the case even of the Rechabites, who were not of Israel. Again, from Daniel's history we learn that illumination, or other miraculous power, is the reward of fasting and prayer. "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. . . . . And he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart *to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God*, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. . . . . Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days." With this passage compare St. Peter's vision about the Gentiles while he prayed and fasted; and, again, our Lord's words about casting out the "dumb and deaf spirit," "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."[1] It is then by a similar appointment that Intercession is the prerogative and gift of the obedient and holy.

5. Why should we be unwilling to admit what it is so great a consolation to know? Why should we refuse to credit the transforming power and efficacy of our Lord's Sacrifice? Surely He did not die for any common end, but in order to exalt man, who was of the dust of the field, into "heavenly places." He did not die to leave him as he was, sinful, ignorant, and miserable. He

[1] Ex. xx. 12; Jer. xxxv. 18, 19; Dan. x. 2-14; Mark ix. 29.

did not die to see His purchased possession, as feeble in good works, as corrupt, as poor-spirited; and as despondiñg as before He came. Rather, He died to renew him after His own image, to make him a being He might delight and rejoice in, to make him "partaker of the divine nature," to fill him within and without with a flood of grace and glory, to pour out upon him gift upon gift, and virtue upon virtue, and power upon power, each acting upon each, and working together one and all, till he becomes an Angel upon earth, instead of a rebel and an outcast. He died to bestow upon him that privilege which implies or involves all others, and brings him into nearest resemblance to Himself, the privilege of Intercession. This, I say, is the Christian's especial prerogative; and if he does not exercise it, certainly he has not risen to the conception of his real place among created beings. Say not he is a son of Adam, and has to undergo a future judgment; I know it; but he is something besides. How far he is advanced into that higher state of being, how far he still languishes in his first condition, is, in the case of individuals, a secret with God. Still every Christian is in a certain sense both in the one and in the other: viewed in himself he ever prays for pardon, and confesses sin; but viewed in Christ, he "has access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God."[1] Viewed in his place in "the Church of the First-born enrolled in heaven," with his original debt cancelled in Baptism, and all subsequent penalties put aside by Absolution, standing in God's

[1] Rom. v. 2.

presence upright and irreprovable, accepted in the Beloved, clad in the garments of righteousness, anointed with oil, and with a crown upon his head, in royal and priestly garb, as an heir of eternity, full of grace and good works, as walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless, such an one, I repeat it, is plainly in his fitting place when he intercedes. He is made after the pattern and in the fulness of Christ—he is what Christ is. Christ intercedes above, and he intercedes below. Why should he linger in the doorway, praying for pardon, who has been allowed to share in the grace of the Lord's passion, to die with Him and rise again? He is already in a capacity for higher things. His prayer thenceforth takes a higher range, and contemplates not himself merely, but others also. He is taken into the confidence and counsels of his Lord and Saviour. He reads in Scripture what the many cannot see there, the course of His providence, and the rules of His government in this world. He views the events of history with a divinely enlightened eye. He sees that a great contest is going on among us between good and evil. He recognizes in statesmen, and warriors, and kings, and people, in revolutions and changes, in trouble and prosperity, not merely casual matters, but instruments and tokens of heaven and of hell. Thus he is in some sense a prophet; not a servant, who obeys without knowing his Lord's plans and purposes, but even a confidential "familiar friend" of the Only-begotten Son of God, calm, collected, prepared, resolved, serene, amid this restless and unhappy world. O mystery of blessedness, too great to think of

steadily, lest we grow dizzy! Well is it for those who are so gifted, that they do not for certain know their privilege; well is it for them that they can but timidly guess at it, or rather, I should say, are used, as well as bound, to contemplate it as external to themselves, lodged in the Church of which they are but members, and the gift of all saints in every time and place, without curiously inquiring whether it is theirs peculiarly above others, or doing more than availing themselves of it as any how a trust committed to them (with whatever success) to use. Well is it for them; for what mortal heart could bear to know that it is brought so near to God Incarnate, as to be one of those who are perfecting holiness, and stand on the very steps of the throne of Christ?

To conclude. If any one asks, "How am I to know whether I am advanced enough in holiness to intercede?" he has plainly mistaken the doctrine under consideration. The privilege of Intercession is a trust committed to all Christians who have a clear conscience and are in full communion with the Church. We leave secret things to God—what each man's real advancement is in holy things, and what his real power in the unseen world. Two things alone concern us, to exercise our gift and make ourselves more and more worthy of it. The slothful and unprofitable servant hid his Lord's talent in a napkin. This sin be far from us as regards one of the greatest of our gifts! By words and works we can but teach or influence a few; by our prayers we may benefit the whole world, and every individual of it, high and low, friend, stranger,

and enemy. Is it not fearful then to look back on our past lives even in this one respect? How can we tell but that our king, our country, our Church, our institutions, and our own respective circles, would be in far happier circumstances than they are, had we been in the practice of more earnest and serious prayer for them? How can we complain of difficulties, national or personal, how can we justly blame and denounce evil-minded and powerful men, if we have but lightly used the intercessions offered up in the Litany, the Psalms, and in the Holy Communion? How can we answer to ourselves for the souls who have, in our time, lived and died in sin; the souls that have been lost and are now waiting for judgment, the infidel, the blasphemer, the profligate, the covetous, the extortioner; or those again who have died with but doubtful signs of faith, the death-bed penitent, the worldly, the double-minded, the ambitious, the unruly, the trifling, the self-willed, seeing that, for what we know, we were ordained to influence or reverse their present destiny and have not done it?

Secondly and lastly, If so much depend on us, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" Oh that we may henceforth be more diligent than heretofore, in keeping the mirror of our hearts unsullied and bright, so as to reflect the image of the Son of God in the Father's presence, clean from the dust and stains of this world, from envies and jealousies, strife and debate, bitterness and harshness, indolence and impurity, care and discontent, deceit and meanness, arrogance and boasting! Oh that we may

labour, not in our own strength, but in the power of God the Holy Spirit, to be sober, chaste, temperate, meek, affectionate, good, faithful, firm, humble, patient, cheerful, resigned, under all circumstances, at all times, among all people, amid all trials and sorrows of this mortal life! May God grant us the power, according to His promise, through His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ!

SERMON XXV.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

REV. vi. 11.

"*And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*"

IN taking these words as a text, I do not profess to give you any sufficient explanation of them. Doubtless in their full meaning they are to deep for mortal man; yet they are written for our reverent contemplation at least, and perchance may yield something, under God's blessing, even though the true and entire sense of them was lost to the Church with him who wrote them. He was admitted into the heaven of heavens, while yet in the flesh, as St. Paul before him. He saw the throne and Him who sat on it; and his words, as those of the prophets under the Law, are rather spontaneous accompaniments on what he saw, than definite and complete descriptions addressed to us. They were provided, indeed, and directed according to our need, by an overruling inspiration; but the same sacred influence also limited their range, and deter-

mined under what aspect and circumstances they should delineate the awful realities of heaven. Thus they are but shadows cast, or at best, lines or portions caught from what is unseen, and they attend upon it after the manner of the Seraphim, with wings covering their face, and wings covering their feet, in adoration and in mystery.

Now as to the text itself, it speaks of the Martyrs in their disembodied state, between death and judgment; according to the foregoing verse, "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." It describes them in a state of rest; still they cry out for some relief, for vengeance upon their persecutors. They are told to wait awhile, "to rest yet for a little season," till the circle of Martyrs is completed. Meantime they receive some present earnest of the promise, by way of alleviation; "white robes were given unto every one of them."

Some men will say that this is all figurative, and means merely that the blood of the Martyrs, crying now for vengeance, will be requited on their murderers at the last day. I cannot persuade myself thus to dismiss so solemn a passage. It seems a presumption to say of dim notices about the unseen world, "they only mean this or that," as if one had ascended into the third heaven, or had stood before the throne of God. No; I see herein a deep mystery, a hidden truth, which I cannot handle or define, shining "as jewels at the bottom of the great deep,"[1] darkly and tremulously, yet really there. And for this very reason, while it is

[1] Davison on "Sacrifice."

neither pious nor thankful to explain away the words which convey it, while it is a duty to use them, not less a duty is it to use them humbly, diffidently, and teachably, with the thought of God before us, and of our own nothingness.

Under these feelings I shall now attempt to comment upon the text, and with reference to the Intermediate State, of which it seems plainly to speak. But it will be best rather to use it as sanctioning and connecting our anticipations of that State, as drawn from more obvious passages of Scripture, than to venture to infer anything from it in the first instance. Also, though it directly speaks of the Martyrs, it may be profitably applied to the case of all Saints whatever; for, the Martyrs being types and first fruits of all, what is true of them, is perchance in some sense true also of their brethren; and if it be true of any, at least all antecedent objections vanish, against its being true of all, which are the chief arguments we shall have to contend with. Now let us proceed to the consideration proposed.

St. John says:—"I saw under the Altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

1. Now first in this passage we are told that the

Saints are *at rest.* "White robes were given unto every one of them." "It was said unto them that they should *rest* yet for a little season." This is expressed still more strongly in a later passage of the same book: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth.* Yea, saith the Spirit, that they *may rest from their labours.*" Again, St. Paul had a desire "to depart and *to be with Christ,* which (he adds) is far better." And our Lord told the penitent robber, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in *paradise.*" And in the parable He represents Lazarus as being "*in Abraham's bosom;*" a place of rest surely, if words can describe one.

If we had no other notice of the dead than the foregoing, it would appear quite sufficient for our need. The great and anxious question that meets us is, what is to become of us after this life? We fear for ourselves we are solicitous about our friends, just on this point. They have vanished from us with all their amiable and endearing qualities, all their virtues, all their active powers. Where is that spirit gone, over the wide universe, up or down, which once thought, felt, loved, hoped, planned, acted in our sight, and which, wherever it goes, must carry with it the same affections and principles, desires and aims? We know how it thought, felt, and behaved itself on earth; we know that beloved mind, and it knows us, with a mutual consciousness;—and now it is taken from us, what are its fortunes?—This is the question which perplexed the heathen of old time. It is fearful to be exposed in this world to ills we know of—to the fury of the elements and the darkness of night, should we be left houseless and shelterless.

But when we think how utterly ignorant we are both of the soul's nature and of the invisible world, the idea of losing friends, or departing ourselves into such gloom, is, to those who get themselves to think about it, very overpowering. Now, here Scripture meets our need, in the texts already cited. It is enough, surely, to be in Abraham's bosom, in our Saviour's presence; it is enough, after the pain and turmoil of this world, to be at rest.

Moreover, texts such as these do more than satisfy the doubts which beset the heathen; they are useful to us at the present day, in a perplexity which may easily befall us. A great part of the Christian world, as is well known, believes that after this life the souls of Christians ordinarily go into a prison called Purgatory, where they are kept in fire or other torment, till, their sins being burned away, they are at length fitted for that glorious kingdom into which nothing defiled can enter. Now, if there were any good reason for this belief, we should certainly have a very sad and depressing prospect before us:—watch and pray and struggle as we might, yet after all to have to pass from the sorrows of this life, from its weariness and its pains, into a second and a worse trial! Not that we should have any reason to complain: for our sins deserve an eternal punishment, were God severe. Still it would be a very afflicting thought, especially as regarded our deceased friends, who (if the doctrine were true) would now, at this very moment, be in a state of suffering. I do not say that to many a sinner, it would not be an infinitely less evil to suffer for a time in Purgatory,

than to be cast into hell for ever; but those whom we have loved best, and revered most, are not of this number; and before going on to examine the grounds of it, every one must admit it to be a very frightful notion at least, that *they* should be kept from their rest, and confined in a prison beneath the earth. Nay, though the Bible did not positively affirm it, yet if it did not contradict it, and if the opinion itself was very general in the Church (as it is), and primitive too (as it is not), there would be enough in it reasonably to alarm us; for who could tell in such a case, but probably it might be true? This is what might have been; but, in fact, Christ has mercifully interfered, expressly to assure us that our friends are better provided for than this doctrine would make it appear.[1] He assures us that they "*rest* from their labours, and their works do follow them;" and we gather from the text, that even that loneliness and gloom which, left to themselves, they would necessarily feel, though ever so secured from actual punishment, may, in truth, be mercifully compensated. The sorrowful state is there described, in which they would find themselves when severed from the body, and waiting for the promised glory at Christ's coming, and they are represented as sustained under it, soothed, quieted, consoled. As a parent would hush a child's restlessness, cherishing it in her arms, and lulling it to sleep, or diverting it from the pain or the fright which agitates it, so the season of delay,

[1] It ought perhaps to be added, by way of explanation, that the doctrine would of course be binding on our faith, in spite of any *primâ facie* bearing of certain texts, were it, what our formularies imply it is not, a doctrine sanctioned by the Catholic Church.

before Christ comes in judgment, tedious in itself, and solitary, is compensated to the spirits of the just by a present gift in earnest of the future joy. "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" Such is their complaint. "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season," till the end.

2. Next, in this description is implied, what I have in fact already deduced from it, that departed Saints, though at rest, have not yet received their actual reward. "Their works do follow with them," not yet given in to their Saviour and Judge. They are in an incomplete state in every way, and will be so till the Day of Judgment, which will introduce them to the joy of their Lord.

They are incomplete, inasmuch as their bodies are in the dust of the earth, and they wait for the Resurrection.

They are incomplete, as being neither awake nor asleep; I mean, they are in a state of rest, not in the full employment of their powers. The Angels are serving God actively; they are ministers between heaven and earth. And the Saints, too, one day shall judge the world—they shall judge the fallen Angels; but at present, till the end comes, they are at rest only, which is enough for their peace, enough for our comfort on thinking of them, still, incomplete, compared with what one day shall be.

Further, there is an incompleteness also as regards their place of rest. They are "under the Altar." Not in the full presence of God, seeing His face, and rejoicing

in His works, but in a safe and holy treasure-house close by,—like Moses, "in a cleft of the rock,"—covered by the hand of God, and beholding the skirts of His glory. So again, when Lazarus died, he was carried to Abraham's bosom;—which, however honoured and peaceful an abode, was a place short of heaven. This is elsewhere expressed by the use of the word "paradise," or the garden of Eden; which, again, though pure and peaceful, visited by Angels and by God Himself, was not heaven. No emblem could express more vividly the refreshment and sweetness of that blessed rest, than to call it the garden in which the first man was placed;—to which must be added St. Paul's account of it, that he heard in it (when he was caught up thither) "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."[1] Doubtless, it is full of excellent visions and wonderful revelations. God there manifests Himself, not as on earth dimly, and by material instruments, but by those more intimate approaches which spirit admits of, and our present faculties cannot comprehend. And in some unknown way, that place of rest has a communication with this world, so that disembodied souls know what is going on below. The Martyrs, in the passage before us, cry out, "How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" They saw what was going on in the Church, and needed comfort from the sight of the triumph of evil. And they obtained white robes and a message of peace. Still, whatever be their knowledge, whatever their

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 4.

happiness, they have but lost their tabernacle of corruption, and are "unclothed," and wait to be "clothed upon," having put off "mortality," but not yet being absorbed in "life."[1]

There is another word used in Scripture to express the abode of just men made perfect, which gives us the same meaning. Our Lord is said in the Creed to have "descended into *hell*," which word has a very different sense there from that which it commonly bears. Our Saviour, as we suppose, did not go to the abyss assigned to the fallen Angels, but to those mysterious mansions where the souls of all men await the judgment. That He went to the abode of blessed spirits is evident, from His words addressed to the robber on the cross, when He also called it paradise; that he went to some other place besides paradise, may be conjectured from St. Peter's saying, He "went and preached to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient."[2] The circumstance then that these two abodes of disembodied good and bad, are called by one name, Hades, or (as we happen to express it) hell, seems clearly to show that paradise is not the same as Heaven, but a resting-place at the foot of it. Let it be further remarked, that Samuel, when brought from the dead, in the witch's cavern, said, "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me *up?*"[3] words which would seem quite inconsistent with his being then already in Heaven.

Once more, the Intermediate State is incomplete as regards the happiness of the Saints. Before our Lord came, it may be supposed even to have admitted

[1] 2 Cor. v. 4. [2] 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. [3] 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

at times of a measure of disquiet, and that in the case of the greatest Saints themselves, though most surely still they were altogether "in God's hand;" for Samuel says, "Why hast thou *disquieted* me, to bring me up?" Perchance our Lord reversed this imperfection at His coming, and took with Him, even in their bodies, to heaven itself, some principal Saints of the old Covenant; according to St. Matthew's intimation. But even now, as it would appear from the text, the Blessed, in their disembodied state, admit of an increase of happiness, and receive it. "They cried out" in complaint,—and "white robes were given them;" they were soothed and bid wait awhile.

Nor would it be surprising if, in God's gracious providence, the very purpose of their remaining thus for a season at a distance from heaven, were, that they may have time for growing in all holy things, and perfecting the inward development of the good seed sown in their hearts. The Psalmist speaks of the righteous as "trees planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in due season;" and when might this silent growth of holiness more suitably and happily take place, than when they are waiting for the Day of the Lord, removed from those trials and temptations which were necessary for its early beginnings? Consider how many men are very dark and feeble in their religious state, when they depart hence, though true servants of God as far as they go. Alas! I know that the multitude of men do not think of religion at all;—they are thoughtless in their youth, and secular as life goes on;—they find their interest lie in adopting a

decent profession; they deceive themselves, and think themselves religious, and (to all appearance) die with no deeper religion than such a profession implies. Alas! there are many also, who, after careless lives, amend, yet not truly;—think they repent, but do not in a Christian way. There are a number, too, who leave repentance for their death-bed, and die with no fruits of religion at all, except with so much of subdued and serious feeling as pain forces upon them. All these, as far as we are told, die without hope. But, after all these melancholy cases are allowed for, many there are still, who, beginning well, and persevering for years, yet are even to the end but beginners after all, when death comes upon them;—many who have been in circumstances of especial difficulty, who have had fiercer temptations, more perplexing trials than the rest, and in consequence have been impeded in their course. Nay, in one sense, all Christians die with their work unfinished. Let them have chastened themselves all their lives long, and lived in faith and obedience, yet still there is much in them unsubdued, —much pride, much ignorance, much unrepented, unknown sin, much inconsistency, much irregularity in prayer, much lightness and frivolity of thought. Who can tell, then, but, in God's mercy, the time of waiting between death and Christ's coming, may be profitable to those who have been His true servants here, as a time of maturing that fruit of grace, but partly formed in them in this life—a school-time of contemplation, as this world is a discipline of active service? Such, surely, is the force of the Apostle's words, that "He

that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it *until* the day of Jesus Christ," *until*, not *at*, not stopping it with death, but carrying it on to the Resurrection. And this, which will be accorded to all Saints, will be profitable to each in proportion to the degree of holiness in which he dies; for, as we are expressly told that in one sense the spirits of the just are *perfected* on their death, it follows that the greater advance each has made here, the higher will be the line of his subsequent growth between death and the Resurrection.

And all this accounts for what else may surprise us, —the especial stress the Apostles lay on the coming of Christ, as the object to which our hope must be directed. We are used in this day to look upon death as the point of victory and triumph for the Saints;— we leave the thought of them when life is over, as if then there was nothing more to be anxious about; nor in one sense is there. Then they are secure from trial, from falling; as they die, so they remain. Still, it will be found, on the whole, that death is not *the* object put forward in Scripture for hope to rest upon, but the *coming of Christ*, as if the interval between death and His coming was by no means to be omitted in the process of our preparation for heaven. Now, if the sacred writers uniformly hold out Christ's coming, but we consider death, as the close of all things, is it not plain that, in spite of our apparent agreement with them in formal statements of doctrine, there must be some hidden and undetected difference between them and ourselves, some unfounded notion on our part which we have inherited, some assumed premiss, some lurking preju-

dice, some earthly temper, or some mere human principle? For instance, St. Paul speaks of the Corinthians as "*waiting for the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ." To the Philippians he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we *look out for the Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body." In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, he seems to make this waiting for the Last Day almost part of his definition of a true Christian; "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to *wait for His Son from heaven*." In his Epistle to Titus, "*Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing* of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." To the Hebrews, "Unto them that *look for Him*, shall Christ appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Again, "*Ye have need of patience*, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might *receive the promise. For yet a little while*, and he that shall come will come and will not tarry." And to the Romans, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," *i.e.* at the Resurrection; for *the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestion of the sons of God.* . . . We ourselves groan within ourselves, *waiting for the adoption*, to wit, the redemption of our body;" and presently he adds, evidently speaking of things belonging to the unseen world, and (as we may suppose) the Intermediate State inclusively, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor *things to come*, nor height, nor depth,

nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Again, "He that raised up the Lord Jesus, shall *raise up us also by Jesus*, and shall present us with you. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; . . . *for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God*, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Now, how parallel is this waiting for Christ's coming, as inculcated in the foregoing passages, to the actual conduct of the Saints as recorded in the passage of which the text forms part! "*How long*, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? . . . . And white robes were given unto every one of them, *until* their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled:"—and with our Saviour's words in the Gospel, "Shall not God *avenge* His own elect, *which cry day and night unto Him*, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, *when the Son of man cometh*" (Christ's coming then is the "avenging" for which they cry), "when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth."[1]

This, indeed, is our Saviour's usual doctrine as well as that of His Apostles. I mean, it is his custom to insist

[1] 1 Cor. i. 7; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Thess. i. 9, 10; Tit. ii. 13; Heb. ix. 28; x. 36, 37; Rom. viii. 18–39; 2 Cor. iv. 14–17; v. 1; Luke xviii. 7, 8.

on two events chiefly, His first coming and His second —our regeneration and our resurrection—throwing into the background the prospect of our death, as if it were but a line of distinction (however momentous a one), not of division, in the extended course of our purification. For example: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live;"—the dead in sin; here, then, our regeneration is set forth. Then He proceeds: "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Here is mentioned His second coming with its attendant events. Again: "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I *will come again* and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." And in the parable of the talents: "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and to return; and he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."[1] Here is mention of Christ's first and His second coming. It is not uncommon, indeed, to say, that "till I come," means "till every man's death," when in a certain sense Christ comes to him: but surely this is a mere human assumption; the time of judgment, and not till then, is the time when Christ calls His servants and takes account.

[1] John v. 25–29; xiv. 2, 3; Luke xix. 12, 13.

Lastly, it is the manner of Scripture to imply that all Saints make up but one body, Christ being the Head, and no real distinction existing between dead and living; as if the Church's territory were a vast field, only with a veil stretched across it, hiding part from us. This at least, I think, will be the impression left on the mind after a careful study of the inspired writers. St. Paul says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the *whole* family in heaven and earth is named," where "heaven" would seem to include paradise. Presently he declares that there is but "one body," not two, as there is but one Spirit. In another epistle he speaks of Christians in the flesh being "come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and the spirits of just men made perfect."[1] Agreeably to this doctrine, the collect for All Saints' Day teaches us, that "Almighty God has knit together His elect" (that is, both living and dead), "in *one* communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son."

This, then, on the whole, we may humbly believe to be the condition of the Saints before the Resurrection, a state of repose, rest, security; but again a state more like paradise than heaven—that is, a state which comes short of the glory which shall be revealed in us after the Resurrection, a state of waiting, meditation, hope, in which what has been sown on earth may be matured and completed.

I will make one remark before concluding, by way of applying what has been said to ourselves. There have been times, we know, when men thought too much of

[1] Eph. iii. 14, 15; iv. 4; Heb. xii. 22, 23.

the dead. That is not the fault of this age. We now go into the opposite extreme. Our fault surely is, to think of them too little. It is a miserable thing to confess, yet surely so it is, that when a friend or relative is dead, he is commonly dismissed from the mind very shortly, as though he was not; there is no more talk of him, or reference to him, and the world goes on without him as if he had never been. Now, of course the deepest feelings are those which are silent; so I do not mean to say that friends are not thought of, because they are not talked of. How could it be? Can any form of society or any human doctrine fetter down our hearts, and make us think and remember as it will? Can the tyranny of earth hinder our holding a blessed and ever-enduring fellowship with those who are dead, by consulting their wishes, and dwelling upon their image, and trying to imitate them, and imagining their peaceful state, and sympathizing in their "loud cry," and hoping to meet them hereafter? No, truly! we have a more glorious liberty than man can take from us, with all the sophistries of selfishness, and subtleties of the schools! I do not speak of the tender-hearted, affectionate, and thoughtful. They cannot forget the departed, whose presence they once enjoyed, and who (in Scripture language), though "absent in the body, are present with them in spirit," "joying and beholding their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ."[1] But I speak of the many, the rude, cold, and scornful, the worldly-minded, the gay, and the careless; whose ordinary way it is, when a friend is removed, to put

[1] 1 Cor. v. 3; Col. ii. 5.

aside the thought of him, and blot it out from their memories.

Let me explain what I mean by taking an instance, which is not uncommon. We will say, a parent or relative dies and leaves a man a property: he comes into it gladly; buries the dead splendidly; and then thinking he has done all, he wipes out what is past, and enters upon the enjoyment of his benefaction. He is not profuse or profligate, proud or penurious, but he thinks and acts in all respects as if he, to whom he is indebted, were annihilated from God's creation. He has no obligations. He was dependent before, but now he is independent; he is his own master; he ceases to be in the number of "little children." Like the Corinthians, "now he is full, now he is rich, he reigns as a king without" those to whom he once was forced to submit. He is the head of (what is called) an establishment. If he ever speaks of the dead, it is in a way half kind, half contemptuous, as of those who are helpless and useless, as he would speak of men still living who were in dotage or in mental incapacity. You hear even the most good-hearted and kindly (such is the force of bad example) speak in this disrespectful way of old people they knew in their youth, not meaning anything unkind by it, but still, doubtless, cherishing in themselves thereby a very subtle kind of hardness, selfishness, superciliousness, self-gratulation. Men little think what an effect all this has on their general character. It teaches them to limit their belief to what they see. They give up a most gracious means divinely provided for their entering into "that which is within the veil,"

and seeing beyond the grave; and they learn to be contented in uniting themselves with things visible, in connections and alliances which come to nought. Moreover, this same error casts them upon the present instead of the past. They lose their reverence for antiquity; they change the plans and works of their predecessors without scruple; they enjoy the benefactions of past ages without thankfulness, as if by a sort of right; they worship in churches for which "other men laboured," without thinking of them; they forget they have but a life-interest in what they possess, that they have received it in trust, and must transmit as they have received.

On the other hand, while the thought of the dead is thus a restraint upon us, it is also a great consolation, especially in this age of the world, when the Universal Church has fallen into errors and is divided branch against branch. What shall sustain our faith (under God's grace) when we try to adhere to the Ancient Truth, and seem solitary? What shall nerve the "watchman on the walls of Jerusalem," against the scorn and jealousy of the world, the charge of singularity, of fancifulness, of extravagance, of rashness? What shall keep us calm and peaceful within, when accused of "troubling Israel," and "prophesying evil?" What but the vision of all Saints of all ages, whose steps we follow? What but the image of Christ mystical stamped upon our hearts and memories? The early times of purity and truth have not passed away! They are present still! We are not solitary, though we seem so. Few now alive may understand

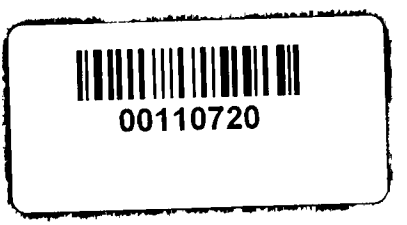
or sanction us; but those multitudes in the primitive time, who believed, and taught, and worshipped, as we do, still live unto God, and, in their past deeds and their present voices, cry from the Altar. They animate us by their example; they cheer us by their company; they are on our right hand and our left, Martyrs, Confessors, and the like, high and low, who used the same Creeds, and celebrated the same Mysteries, and preached the same Gospel as we do. And to them were joined, as ages went on, even in fallen times, nay, even now in times of division, fresh and fresh witnesses from the Church below. In the world of spirits there is no difference of parties. It is our plain duty indeed here, to contend even for the details of the Truth according to our light; and surely there is a Truth in spite of the discordance of opinions. But that Truth is at length simply discerned by the spirits of the just; human additions, human institutions, human enactments, enter not with them into the unseen state. They are put off with the flesh. Greece and Rome, England and France, give no colour to those souls which have been cleansed in the One Baptism, nourished by the One Body, and moulded upon the One Faith. Adversaries agree together directly they are dead, if they have lived and walked in the Holy Ghost. The harmonies combine and fill the temple, while discords and imperfections die away. Therefore is it good to throw ourselves into the unseen world, it is "good to be there," and to build tabernacles for those who speak "a pure language" and "serve the Lord with one consent;" not indeed to draw them forth from their secure dwelling-places, not

superstitiously to honour them, or wilfully to rely on them, lest they be a snare to us, but silently to contemplate them for our edification; thereby encouraging our faith, enlivening our patience, sheltering us from thoughts about ourselves, keeping us from resting on ourselves, and making us seem to ourselves (what really we ought ever to be) only followers of the doctrine of those who have gone before us, not teachers of novelties, not founders of schools.

God grant to us all, out of the superabundant treasures of His grace, such a spirit, the spirit of mingled teachableness and zeal, of calmness in inquiry and vigour in resolve, of power, and of love, and of a sound mind!

THE END.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY R. SANSON.


00110720

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 19 September, 2016